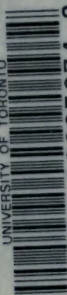
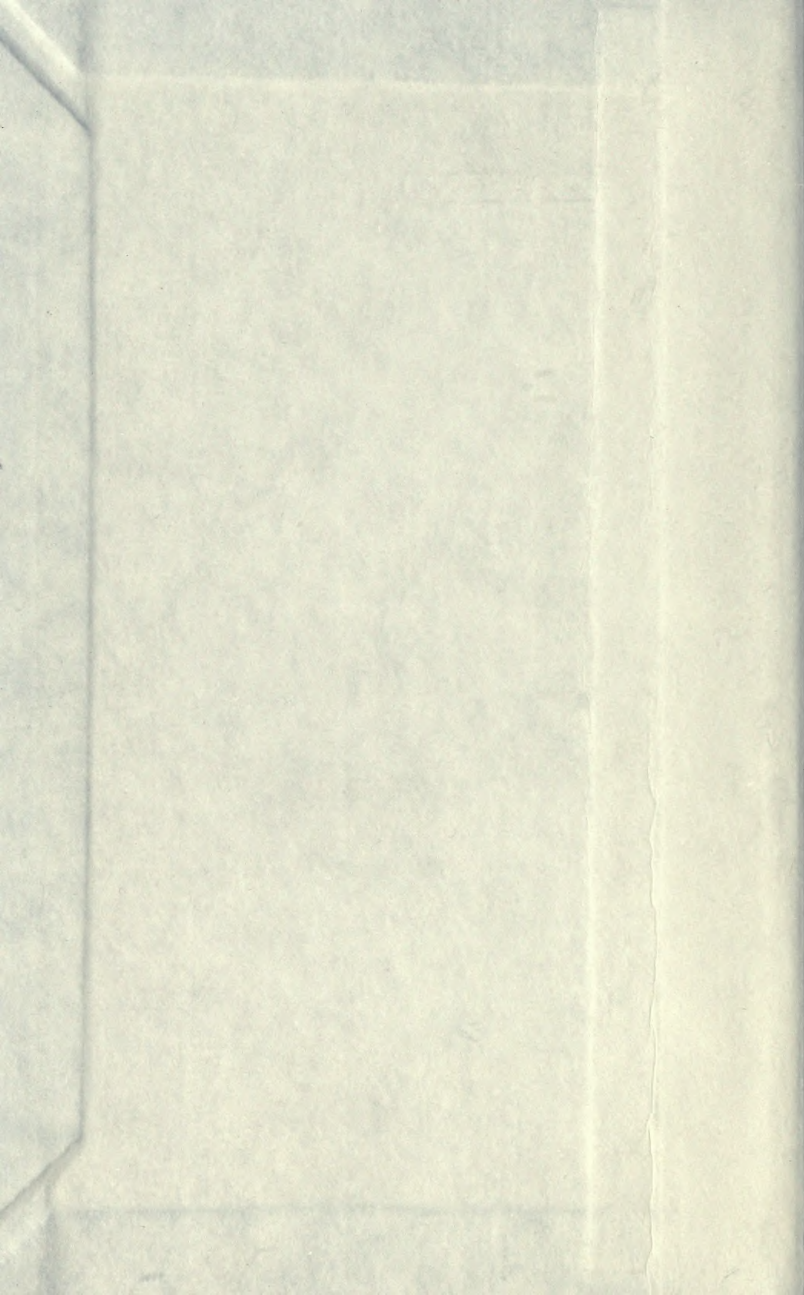
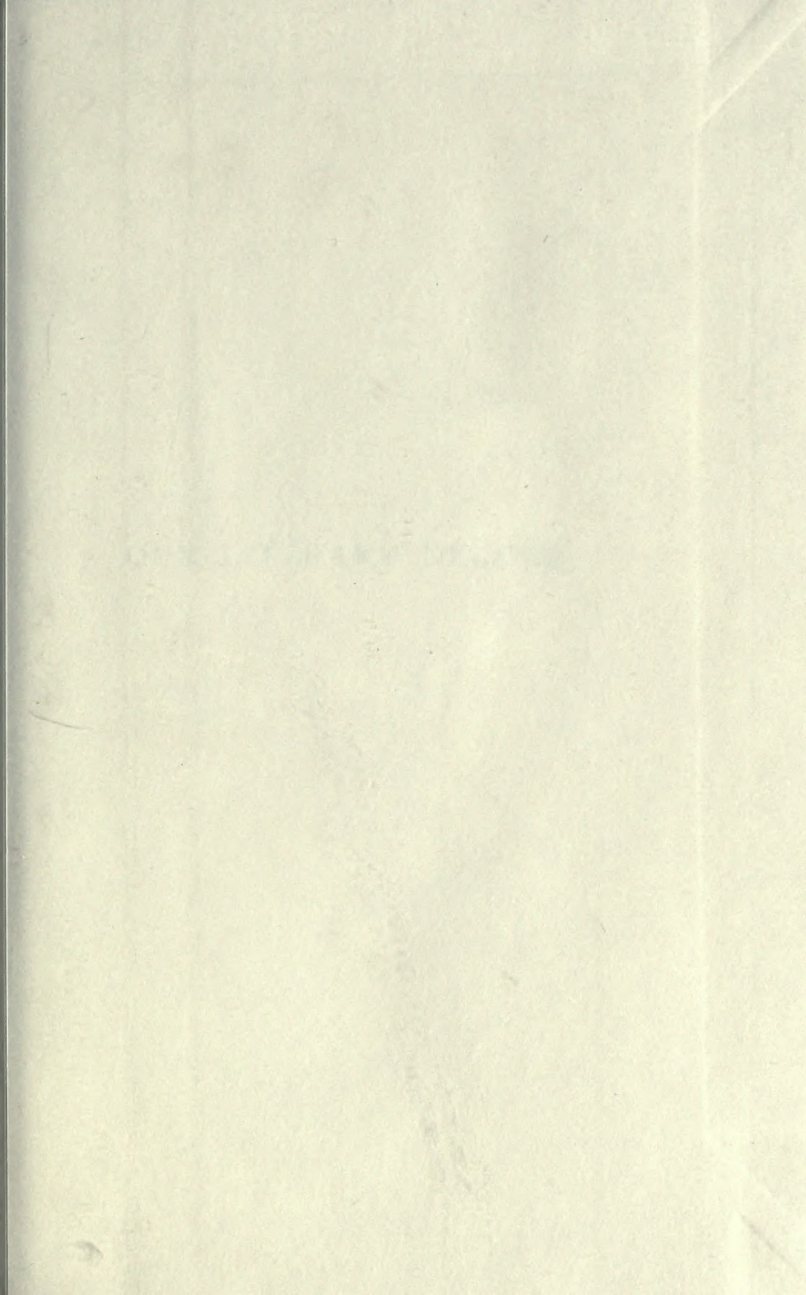


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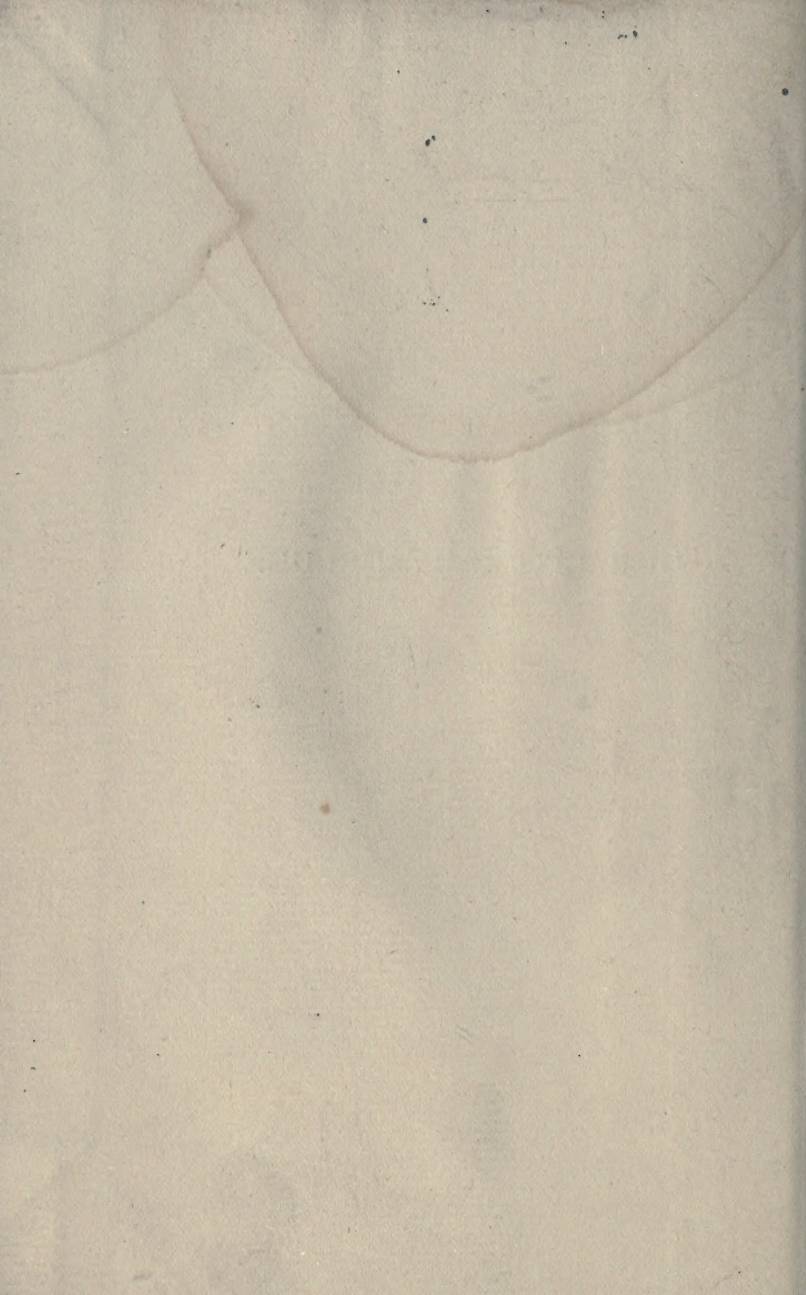




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OUR LITERARY DELUGE



# OUR LITERARY DELUGE

AND SOME OF ITS  
DEEPER WATERS

BY

FRANCIS WHITING HALSEY

AUTHOR OF "THE OLD NEW YORK FRONTIER"



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TO

L. H.

WITH HER BROTHER'S BEST LOVE





FOR permission to reprint so much of this volume as originally appeared in the *New York Times* and its *Saturday Review of Books*, in the *Critic*, the *Book Buyer*, the *Independent*, and the *St. Paul Globe*, the author desires sincerely to thank the owners of those publications.

In a sense this comprises a considerable part of the contents — probably as much as two-thirds ; but the matter has been thoroughly readjusted, expanded, and rewritten from new points of view.



# CONTENTS

## PART I

### PHASES OF THE INUNDATION

	PAGE
I. THE ENORMOUS OUTPUT . . . . .	3
II. CAUSES . . . . .	9
III. PECUNIARY REWARDS . . . . .	20
IV. THE GREAT UNKNOWN . . . . .	29
V. YELLOW JOURNALISM IN LITERATURE . . . . .	43
VI. COURTS OF APPEAL . . . . .	48
VII. IMPOSSIBLE ACADEMIES . . . . .	57
VIII. MODERN EDITING . . . . .	63
IX. THE MECHANICAL SIDE OF BOOKS . . . . .	77
X. LIBRARIANS AND THEIR INFLUENCE . . . . .	86
XI. THE PATHOS OF A MASTER'S FATE . . . . .	94
XII. THE BURNING QUESTION . . . . .	104

## PART II

### DEEP WATERS AND MAIN CHANNELS

I. BOOKS THAT LIVE ON THROUGH THE YEARS . . . . .	115
II. WRITERS AND SOMETHING MORE . . . . .	122
III. BIOGRAPHIES THAT ARE HISTORIES . . . . .	133



	PAGE
IV. FASHIONS IN COLLECTING . . . . .	150
V. PROFITS IN RARE BOOKS . . . . .	160
VI. PARKMAN AND SOME OF HIS "SOURCES" . . .	172
VII. SCOTT'S SURVIVING POPULARITY . . . . .	179
VIII. MEMOIRS AND MEMOIR WRITERS . . . . .	184
IX. BURNS AS AN EDINBURGH LION . . . . .	198
X. PEPYS, THE LITTLE AND THE GREAT . . . . .	206
XI. CHESTERFIELD, THE FORGOTTEN AND THE RE- MEMBERED . . . . .	214
XII. LORD HERBERT OF CHERBURY . . . . .	224
XIII. GIBBON'S SOLITARY GRANDEUR . . . . .	233
INDEX . . . . .	247

PART I

PHASES OF THE INUNDATION





# OUR LITERARY DELUGE

## I

### THE ENORMOUS OUTPUT

It is a universal and much-expressed regret that the literary output has of late years become almost a flood. On all sides one hears complaints of it. Men and women are perplexed to know where they shall begin their reading and where end it. The books published in Great Britain alone now number each year 6000, and perhaps they have gone up to 7000, of which only about 1500 are new editions. These figures have not yet been reached in America, but they have been very nearly approached; so that in the two countries we have each year about 11,000 books, though many of these are necessarily counted twice, having been brought out in both continents.

In some other lands the figures are still more formidable, — in Italy, 9560; in France, 13,000; in Germany, 23,000.<sup>1</sup> *Le Droit d'Auteur* has estimated the

<sup>1</sup> It is important here to bear in mind the custom in Italy, France, and Germany of recording as books thousands of publications which scarcely rank as books in our meaning of the word. Dr. E. C. Richardson, the librarian of Princeton University, has pointed out that among the 9500 Italian books are 4000 which have fewer than twenty-five pages each, while of the French total "more than half are pamphlets under the American definition." He shows further that were

number published in the whole world for a single year at the enormous total of 70,554. With all deductions made for new editions and translations, these figures remain sufficiently impressive. No sane man not engaged in making catalogues could possibly interest himself in any considerable number of these books. Men having widely varied interests and sympathies are necessary in the creation of a market for books published in such thousands. Many are, of course, technical books and school books; others are directories, privately printed books, catalogues, and so on; so that, depressing as the outlook for good literature may remain, it is obviously not so bad as the total would make it appear.

It is now a full generation since the public began to be overwhelmed with books; indeed, a few statistics will show how enormous has been the increase in books, even within the lifetime of many persons still living. From the invention of printing until the beginning of the sixteenth century, it is believed that not more than 30,000 books had been produced in the whole world. As evidence of the rate of growth from that time until the middle of the nineteenth century the number of books offered at the German fairs every twenty-five years is interesting.

the same standards employed in this country, we should have far higher American totals, there having been copyrighted in the year 1899 15,215 publications which in a sense could be called books, but of which only 5834 were books of a substantial kind. In addition, Dr. Richardson believes there are produced in this country each year at least 10,000 pamphlets of twenty-five pages or more each.

In 1650 only 948 books were shown, and there was no marked increase until 1725, when the total rose to 1032, and in 1750 to 1290. But with the opening of the new century an advance was made to 4012, while in 1846 the total reached 10,536. In this country, from 1640 until 1776, a period of 136 years, the output, including almanacs, sermons, and laws, was only about 8000, while for the twenty-four years between 1876 and 1900 the "American Catalogue" was able to record as then in print 170,000 books, and for the single year 1900 the *Trade List Annual* gave a total of 150,000 titles.<sup>1</sup>

Books as they come from the press are in fact fast becoming what many newspapers and magazines have been — publications whose term of life is ephemeral. They exist as the favourites of a month, or possibly a year; then, having had their brief summer-time of success, they silently go their destined way. Oblivion overwhelms them. Not ten per cent of any one year's books can hope to linger a year after their publication in the popular memory even as names.

As a matter of fact the writing of books has degenerated into a sort of habit, which has been steadily growing upon the human race for some years. Time was when to have written a book gave a person some degree of distinction. Men and women were pointed out as authors, and their books, once named in edu-

<sup>1</sup> For these figures the author is indebted to his friend, Mr. A. Growoll, managing editor of the *Publishers' Weekly*.

cated circles, were recognized; but that time has measurably gone by. To have written a book nowadays is to have done what thousands of others have done, or are at present busily engaged in doing. It amounts to little more than does the statement that some person has designed a new building, invented a labour-saving machine, or constructed a new kind of street-car rail.

Meanwhile, though the publishers never before were so deluged with manuscripts, there is something to be thankful for in the fact that only a very small proportion of the writing activity going on ever finds representation in printed books. A few years ago Frederick Macmillan declared publicly in London that his house in one year had accepted only 22 manuscripts out of 315 submitted. Another publisher put his average of acceptance far lower: it was only 13 for 500 submitted. Inclined as we may be to blame the publishers for our deluge, these facts show us how substantial is our debt to them. They have served us most effectually as a dam.

Other figures may appall us still more. The capacity of the book-printing houses and binderies of New York has been reckoned to be 100,000 volumes per week. It is believed that another 100,000 volumes in school books and cheaply made books could also be produced in one week. One New York house has been known to take an order on Monday morning to manufacture 2000 copies of a book containing 350 pages by the following Wednesday night. The



type was all set in a single night; next day the presses were started, and on the third day the covers were on the books. By the end of the week, 10,000 copies had been turned out.

Authors themselves have caught this fever and habit of rapid production. Once fame has come to them, they strive more and more to meet the demand for their writings,—a process certain to ruin their art; and yet few withstand the temptation. One author records, as if he were proud of the achievement, that he can regularly produce 1000 words in a day. Another can write 1500, while the most accomplished of all in that line can produce 4000. Trollope told us he could average 10,000 words a week, and when pushed could more than double the output. Writing done at this rate of speed is not literature and cannot be. It is simply job work, the work of day labourers,—in no sense the work of genius or inspiration.

Confiding readers who may indulge a belief that some of the popular books of the day of this description are to remain fairly permanent additions to English literature, should recall to their minds the titles of some of the most popular favourites of half a century or more ago. Here are an even dozen such: "Ringan Gilhaize," by John Galt (1823); "The Pilgrims of Walsingham," by Agnes Strickland (1825); "Two Friends," by the Countess of Blessington (1825); "Now and Then," by Samuel Warren (1848); "Over Head and Ears," by Dutton

Cook (1868); "Temper and Temperament," by Mrs. Ellis (1846); "Modern Society," by Catharine Sinclair (1837); "Wood Leighton," by Mary Howitt (1836); "Round the Sofa," by Mrs. Gaskell (1859); "The Lost Link," by Thomas Hood (1868); "Lady Herbert's Gentlewoman," by Eliza Meteyard (1862); "Called to Account," by Annie Thomas (1867).

Few readers now living know anything of these books. The younger generation probably never heard of one of them. At the same time, there came from the publishers other books in small editions of which the fame is greater now than it ever was — those of Ruskin, Tennyson, Emerson, Hawthorne, and Carlyle, which have become permanent additions to the glory of the English tongue.

## II

### CAUSES

THE causes of our deluge, once we reflect on the intellectual history of the past twenty or thirty years, are plainly to be seen. They lie in the greater efficiency of the common schools, the increase in attendance at colleges, the enormous growth of libraries, free and otherwise, the spread of such systems of instruction as are provided at Chautauqua, the growth of periodical literature, from reading which the public passes by a natural process of intuition to reading books, the free travelling libraries, and along with these causes the very important one of the general decline in the cost of printing books and magazines. To get an education has become the mere matter of taking the time to get it. One lies within the reach of all who seek it. How keen and widespread has become the appetite for reading is seen in the familiar fact that popular magazines find their largest support in small and distant communities. Many purely literary periodicals have their subscribers scattered through small towns from Maine to Texas, from Florida to the state of Washington. Readers in such localities have become a mainstay of book publishers also.

The natural outcome of this is a tremendous growth

in the number of those who know how to write; who have acquired ideas, power to express themselves, and self-confidence in saying what they think in print. Names often appear on title-pages that were unknown before, even to periodical literature. Many of these writers for years had been acquiring rich stores of knowledge, with literary taste and literary feeling. They have written out of full minds, — as amateurs, it is true, but showing real love and knowledge of books, clearness of understanding, joyousness in work, culture, purpose, power.

Then again, books have become more attractive to the eye. It is beyond dispute that they are better manufactured everywhere, both as to print, binding, and cover design. Even the ordinary novel is more certain to have a cloth than a paper cover. Paper covers as an infliction have definitely passed away. Perhaps the most disastrous failure the book trade has ever seen was made by a house which in the last years of its existence poured them forth with unrestrained profusion. Its failure in considerable degree was due to the unprofitableness of paper-bound books. Cheap as they were, the public would not buy them. Nor has the adoption of cloth covers in any way tended to lessen the quantity of books published, but quite the contrary. Improved methods of distribution meanwhile have sprung up, mainly in the department stores and in methods of advertising, through which have been made possible enormous sales never known before.



England has presented conditions that have operated favourably in other ways. Less expensive books have come from that country; not paper-covered ones, but a single volume where formerly there were three. After a brave and long-extended fight worthy of a better cause, the three-volume novel has received its death-blow. It is not many years since book-buying in England was a pursuit possible only to men with money to spare; but the buying of a popular book is as feasible to a lean English purse now as it is to an American.

Moreover, it has become very easy to get a book printed, being a mere question of paying a printer, and ordinarily \$300 will be quite sufficient. Paper, type-setting, and binding have all been growing cheaper. We have actually no safeguards except the cost. The mind is bewildered when it contemplates the stores of books the Library of Congress must eventually contain, — those it now contains and those it will have added to its store when present conditions have prevailed some generations longer, — a few kernels of wheat lost in heaps of chaff.

Another contributing cause has been foreign wars and what we call territorial expansion. Men's interests and their visions have been widened. New activity has gone into the literary habit as into most other occupations, and here we encounter a familiar fact in history. In the life of nations it is times of war and times just subsequent to them that have seen produced some of the most famous books of the

world. Prolonged periods of peace have often been marked by few books, and notably by commonplace and unimportant ones. From the Napoleonic wars date the poems and some of the early prose writings of Scott, many of Coleridge's poems, Wordsworth's and Byron's — some of the greatest names English literature gathered to her roll of honour in the last century. Nor do these names exhaust the possible list: Landor, Lamb, and Southey belong also to that period. England's earlier conflict, when she warred with her colonies on the Atlantic seaboard, would tell a similar story. Burns was then writing his songs, Boswell collecting material for his biography, and Gibbon telling his story of a great nation's decline and fall. France herself, from the outbreak of the Revolution until the battle of Waterloo, a period of twenty-six years of almost constant warfare, saw produced some of the best-remembered works in modern French literature.

Details from the totals of books published, when carefully studied, afford gleams of hope. Books of theology, poetry, and education have remained about the same in numbers from year to year; but there has been shown in this country an increase of as many as 200 among historical books and 100 among new novels, with still greater increase among reprinted novels, which of course points to interest in standard fiction, and of these the increase has recently been 200.

These figures will not surprise those accustomed to

observe tendencies. Novel-writing has been a growing pursuit, and no signs of decay appear. But it is the novel of adventure and of history that gains the warmest welcome. No writers find such rewards as do successful writers of these books ; nowhere, indeed, is more notable literary art now in evidence. Men and women, after all, are interested in nothing so deeply as in human nature — its fortunes, history, manifestations, and possibilities. To the end of time fiction will be universally read. The tales found in old Egypt, the folk-lore that pervades the literature of every land and epoch, proclaim how wide this interest has been in the past, and sales of novels proclaim how permanent it still remains.

The greatest source of gratification respecting fiction, however, may be derived from the increase in the number of reprints. Samuel Rogers once remarked, "When a new book comes out I read an old one." The public obviously begins to follow his example to some purpose. How rich a storehouse exists to be opened up each year for the delight and admiration of readers ! We may not hope in our time to see produced again such work as the masters did, though an occasional example may be produced worthy of mention ; but with Fielding, Jane Austen, Walter Scott, and all that noble company of the dead who still live, the time need never come when readers will actually lack for good novels to read, or publishers for good ones to reprint.

In the increase among books of history doubtless

lies the most suggestive fact. This reflects known conditions. Never before have historical studies been so popular with so many classes of persons. Not only are the graver and grander topics receiving unwonted attention, but the minor ones, the local annals, the annals of industries and organizations, and those of individual lives; and this increase promises to become even greater before it declines. The fields yet to be explored are many and the material worth the finding is of vast amount.

A distinctive feature of books in this country has been those relating to our own history, whether they were fiction or more sober history. Here we see disclosed the interest in our own storied past which the patriotic societies have done so much to foster. The tendency will scarcely stop here. The next step seems almost inevitably to be the writing of better local histories. Out of this are already coming incentives to the several states, our own included, to print their historical records, which have so long been permitted to rest in archives hidden from the public gaze.

Fiction now embraces over twenty-five per cent of the whole number of books published. History and biography combined are next on the list. Theology stands third and music last. The classification shows conclusively how men and women are interested in nothing so deeply as in the vital aspects of their own race — its past, present, and future — books relating to human life as pictured in fiction, as lived in the



past, and as it may be hereafter. The growth of this interest has clearly been commensurate with the spread of universal education.

Nearly one-half of all the books published come under these three headings. The relative numbers represent in what seems due proportion the various orders of mind found among men and women. Fiction appeals to the largest number, because it appeals most powerfully to the lower grades of intelligence. History properly comes next, and theology, in which only the least common minds take interest, comes last.

Very notable in all this growth has been the rise of New York to its supreme place as a publishing centre. Early in the last century Philadelphia held the chief place in rank. Supremacy then passed to Boston. During the last quarter of a century the publishing business has become more and more one of the distinctions of New York. Statistics on this subject, compiled a few years ago, are interesting. They came from what may be accepted as authentic sources, and gave the number of books published by a few leading houses in the United States.

The list was imperfect in some important respects. It omitted a large English house now on an American business foundation, and all the houses in Chicago, where the importance of publishing interests is growing. One large Boston house was also omitted, and smaller firms there and elsewhere. But the statement as far as it went was extremely interesting, disclosing as it did the ascendancy of New York as

the book centre of the whole country. Here we had 654 books from New York, with only 150 from Boston and 113 from Philadelphia.<sup>1</sup>

It is impossible that the inclusion of all the houses in the country in these lists would have modified New York's overwhelming lead. The one English house omitted would alone have offset for New York nearly all the houses from Boston. It would be entirely safe to affirm that more than two-thirds of all the books published in the country now come from New York. Had we at hand corresponding figures for magazines, the showing would be equally favourable to New York. Boston has only one magazine of distinct rank to set down, and Philadelphia only one.

It is also in New York that the most important sales of books at auction take place. Boston, for example, in all its book history down to 1899, had witnessed the sale of only thirty-six books that fetched as much as \$200, whereas in New York had been sold 275 books for that sum or a larger one. From the point of view of totals realized for collections sold, the results are equally striking in their showing of the supreme place New York holds.

<sup>1</sup> It appeared that D. Appleton & Co. were first among the houses named, having produced 123 books in the year. Then came Charles Scribner's Sons with 121, the J. B. Lippincott Company with 113, Houghton, Mifflin and Company with 104, Longmans, Green & Company with 104, Dodd, Mead and Company with 101, Harper & Brothers with 89, G. P. Putnam's Sons with 46, and the Century Company with 31.

This concentration of literary interests in one place has operated as concentration always does, in facilitating methods of distribution. Combined with the magazines and literary periodicals, now so numerous in New York, it has been a very active force in the popularization of books as reading-matter.

Amid these new and potent factors in contemporary literature have come changes in methods of selling books. No more remarkable influence has entered the trade than the influence of the dry-goods stores, where departments devoted to the sale of the day's popular books have grown to large proportions. Probably the regular book-stores in their totals of trade have not really suffered. What they have lost in one direction, they may have made up in others,—for one thing in what are known as collector's books, for another in fine editions, well-bound books, and in limited editions. Moreover, it should always be remembered that the number of persons who buy books has enormously increased. The number of books published and the sales of successful books present striking contrasts to the corresponding totals for ten and twenty years ago. Such sales as Du Maurier and Maclaren, Hall Caine and Kipling, Stevenson, Churchill, Paul Leicester Ford, and Mrs. Ward have had, were then absolutely unknown.

The larger view of this change will scarcely awaken regrets. Even houses which have suffered from it have probably seen a way to other profits

and to other methods bringing compensations. The public has bought more books and has read more; the general level of knowledge and culture has correspondingly been raised. And this increase will continue. More and more men are acquiring the laudable habit of buying a book as cheerfully as they buy a handful of cigars, and women as willingly as they buy a pair of gloves.

Meanwhile the need remains for some step by which the small bookseller, dealing in current literature, may have his trade restored to him. Wide interest has accordingly been taken in the action of leading publishers in making an agreement which shall cause its members to deal in copyrighted books, exclusive of fiction, at net prices. Members of the association they have formed desire to restore book-selling to its old-time dignity and usefulness (a dignity which it now possesses in Germany through legislative enactment) by maintaining uniform prices.

As everybody knows, the small bookseller has not been able to maintain his own when a department store in his neighbourhood or out of it has found it convenient to cut prices, sometimes merely for advertising purposes, looking for profits from other articles sold to customers who came to buy books and lingered to purchase other things. The book departments in general stores have become so important that it is believed their proprietors are willing to maintain them on their own merits and profits. In fact, members of the association believe that the depart-



ment stores will in the end find it more profitable to maintain prices at the point where they are held by regular booksellers. Success for this action will promise success for the cause which its publishers have made it to represent—the cause of the bookseller, the man who is only now and then a publisher, and of whom there are thousands of representatives in this country that have been threatened for some years with eventual annihilation.

### III

#### PECUNIARY REWARDS

THE sale from the Arnold collection, in May, 1901, of a copy of the first edition, containing the first title-page, of Milton's "Paradise Lost," for \$830, may or may not be the highest price that will ever be paid for a copy of that scarce book; but it starts reminiscences of the strangely unequal rewards which authorship has given from the earliest to the latest times. The money paid to Milton for the copyright of that poem was exactly \$50, in instalments of \$25 each, his estate afterward receiving an additional \$25.

Along with this item may be placed the statement that Nansen, from one of his books describing his Polar explorations, was understood to have received not less than \$100,000. Writing books sometimes pays, but the rewards often stand in curious relation to the fact whether the book is pure literature or mere descriptive writing on a topic in which there happened to be some world-wide interest. Nansen did not get his money simply for writing his book; he got it for going farther north than any other man had gone, for living in Arctic parts during a prolonged season, and for reaching home sound and

well to tell his tale. From Stanley's books the same moral could be drawn.

Milton was an explorer into an unknown world. He went farther among the possibilities of the English tongue than any other man save one had gone before him. The world, however, did not know what he had done until long afterward. He, in the meantime, had sold his book for what he could get, and the world, when it saw what he had accomplished, no longer had a chance to reward him. Nansen and Stanley created their public before they wrote their books; Milton, after he had written his and sold the copyright.

Nansen's success and Stanley's came not merely from the renown of their names, but from the deeds they had performed. An author may have a great name and yet fail to write a successful book. Stanley afterward published a volume called "Through South Africa." His fame had in no wise grown dim, and the land in which he won it was again his theme; but his book awakened no interest whatever. Three weeks after its publication his own American publishers had not heard of it, and no American edition has ever been brought out.

The secret of this indifference lay in the fact that Stanley recorded no great achievement. His book comprised merely a series of newspaper letters from a region fast passing into the list of well-ordered and prosperous states. It was cast aside, while James Bryce's weighty book on the same sub-

ject, issued at the same time, aroused wide interest, bearing as it did to South Africa the relation which his "American Commonwealth" bears to the United States. Stanley's book was a commonplace traveler's chronicle, for which its author had created no public waiting to receive it.

Wherever first editions have sold for great prices, the Kilmarnock Burns for \$2800, Hawthorne's "Fanshawe" for \$412, Shelley's "Alastor" for \$350, Goldsmith's "Vicar of Wakefield" for \$630, Brown-ing's "Pauline" for \$700, and Poe's "Tamerlane" for \$2050, they were books for which, when first issued, there had not been created great demand. There was small sale for them, and hence they became scarce. An active demand afterward advanced the price. There will come to Nansen's book and to Stanley's, out of which fortunes were made, never any competition for first editions. A few years have already retired them from active places in book sales. Milton and Goldsmith, Burns and Shelley, Tennyson and Hawthorne, Longfellow and Poe meanwhile survive to charm new generations. Prices for first editions of their works will go higher still. Nansen and Stanley will survive perhaps as names on maps. Their deeds will get a few lines in the cyclopædias, and that will be all.

Strange, indeed, in other ways, have been the rewards which literature has bestowed. When we think of the princely sums writers have earned in our day, Hall Caine, Kipling, Du Maurier, and Sien-

kiewicz, not to name Mr. Churchill and Mr. Ford, it is startling to remember Burns and his immortal poverty, or Milton selling "Paradise Lost" for that picayune. A negro poet in our day, Paul L. Dunbar, does better than Burns or Milton did. Scarcely a year had passed after his "Lyrics of Lowly Life" came out, when more than 5000 copies had been sold. He was the most widely read poet of a year. In England one of the magazines, following a French custom, had "crowned" a volume of verse by Stephen Phillips, and the newspapers chronicled as a great success the sale of 500 copies, with another edition of 700 as on the press. But here was the coloured man, whom nobody had crowned, boasting 5000 copies.

It is not poetry, nor is it other literature of a creative kind, that wins the largest pecuniary rewards. It is usually the man who performs some great feat, perhaps in exploration, and then writes a book. It was this fact that made General Grant a most successful writer, made Stanley another, and Nansen a third. The returns these authors gained raised them to independence.

Of all writings save those just named, it is fiction that yields the largest returns, because the sales are so enormous. The contrast between the returns which Gibbon received and those which poured into the lap of Scott would probably be as great, and perhaps even greater, were they writing in our times. With the increase Gibbon might now secure, there



would be corresponding increase for Scott. Froude in his later life had an ampler reward than Gibbon; and ampler than Scott's have been the sales of Dickens and Thackeray, Mrs. Ward, Du Maurier, and Crawford. When "Saracinesca" a few years ago was announced as already in its one hundred and tenth thousand, "Mr. Isaacs" in its fifty-fifth, and "Sant' Ilario" (a sequel though it be) in its forty-fourth, one was tempted to count up what even the ordinary royalty would return to Mr. Crawford; but here we might forget that the modern novelist often secures greater sums than a simple fixed royalty would have yielded, because he sells for a large lump sum on the "progressive royalty" plan.

But even Mr. Crawford's sales have since been far outdone. In the late summer of 1901, the following reports were made for other books, as here named; and these figures have, of course, been increased since then.

David Harum . . . . .	520,000 copies
Richard Carvel . . . . .	420,000 "
The Crisis . . . . .	320,000 "
Janice Meredith . . . . .	275,000 "
Eben Holden . . . . .	265,000 "
Quincy Adams Sawyer . . . . .	200,000 "
D'ri and I . . . . .	100,000 "
To Have and to Hold . . . . .	285,000 "
The Christian . . . . .	200,000 "
The Eternal City . . . . .	100,000 "
An English Woman's Love Letters . . . . .	250,000 "
Black Rock	} together nearly
The Sky Pilot	
	500,000 "

Even if we reckon the royalty on these books as only ten per cent, handsome sums of money were secured for writing them, sums which in authorship may be called princely.

When we turn to Jane Austen, another series of facts confronts us. Before George Eliot's time and Charlotte Brontë's, she was unquestionably the greatest of female writers of fiction. But she died in that humble habitation in rural England quite ignorant of the fame her pen had won. Only four of her works had seen the light when she died, and for them all she had been paid less than \$3500, and for one received only \$750. One of her books had been returned unread, while another had been sold for \$50 to a publisher who was glad to return it unprinted and receive his money back. If recognition in her own lifetime was slight, when it came it was emphatic, Scott speaking the loudest word—entirely sincere praise. In his diary Scott describes her talent as "the most wonderful I have met with."

Not more than five years ago some letters were printed which had passed between Burns and one of his publishers, George Thomson. Thomson on one occasion sent Burns \$5 for six songs—compensation which, in its absurd smallness, surpasses what Hawthorne got for some of the "Twice Told Tales"—\$3 each. At the time this Burns correspondence was published, there was sold in Edinburgh a copy of the Kilmarnock edition of "Poems Chiefly in the Scottish Dialect." It brought rather more than

\$2800 — a sum in excess of all that Burns ever received for all his writings — a sum, moreover, which in his lifetime might have purchased a splendid farm and made him an independent young Scotch laird.

Late years have seen some changes in the spirit that prevails in the relations of authors and publishers — an unquestionable change in the proportion of profits the author receives. A better understanding each of the other's point of view has arisen, and greater willingness to make concessions. Advantages have resulted for both — advantages which we know to be considerable for authors (at least for the very popular ones) and which probably have not been unimportant for the publishers. In the early times differences that often were bitter led to accusations and assumptions that were far too sweeping. Because many publishers were rich and authors were commonly poor, it was hastily inferred that injustice had been done. This conclusion lost sight of the fact that a publishing firm might consist of two or three or five individuals only, while the authors for whom they had published books numbered some hundreds. Two men, or three or five, who were publishers, had thus been made rich, while some hundreds of authors, while getting certain returns for their books, had not received enough to make them also rich. Had the result been otherwise and the authors become rich, much greater profits would obviously have been necessary.

The question arises whether these hundreds of

authors got the proper proportion of the profits: did they as a body share as well as the body of two, or three, or five, in the firm of publishers? We have no statistics to help us to arrive at any definite conclusion regarding this; but it would certainly be interesting could we know, for a period of, say, ten years, what proportion existed between the net profits of a successful publishing house and the total sum paid by that house to its authors for the same period. Here we should have facts of considerable service in forming conclusions. But there would still remain a source of grievance for the successful author, for he, in any such reckoning, would be the man who virtually paid for the mistakes of the publishers in bringing out books in which there was not profit, but an actual loss.

It is unlikely that these grievances ever will be entirely adjusted so long as publishers remain a necessity. Obviously the author cannot do without them. Authors have often attempted to become publishers and have usually failed and sometimes have failed memorably. Authors of great popularity have made the experiment, and they too have failed. The difficulty arises from the conditions in which an author's work must reach a market—in a sense, his work is raw material requiring manufacture, advertisement, and sale. It is unmarketable until it has been subjected to such treatment, and success in reaching literary markets comes of long experience.

The publisher may be regarded as the agent of an

author, employed to manufacture and sell for him, or as a servant in the sense that a lawyer or a doctor is the servant of those who employ him, or he may be viewed as a mechanic or tradesman, whose services the author seeks. But there exists one great difference in the relation in most cases. The publisher as an agent is greater than the author as the principal; he has the larger means, the more independence and power. All the same, it has been demonstrated by long experience that the author cannot dispense with him, and his wisest course will be to make the best terms with him that he can.



## IV

### THE GREAT UNKNOWN

How little the world knows of its greatest men is probably better illustrated in literature than in any other calling. One thing almost absolutely proven is that the greatest writers fail of immediate recognition. Recognition starts from the top, or from what Matthew Arnold called "the saving remnant," and thence spreads slowly downward. The regard of the masses never creates real fame. What the masses create is notoriety, while fame comes from the recognition which the best minds bestow. It starts at the top, and the top maintains it, — a small group, silent but firm-set as granite, and it alone secures to any author a title to enduring remembrance. How few are the men and women who ever read Milton or Homer, Dante or Shakespeare, in one generation, compared with those who read the popular novels by which authors may be made rich in a single year. Emerson many years ago put this truth in striking and concrete form when he said of Plato, that at no one time had Plato ever had more than a handful of readers, hardly enough to pay for printing his books, and yet his writings had come down through the centuries, to us, the

strangers of another age, "as though God brought them in His hands."

Some of the foremost names in nineteenth-century literature illustrate what magnificent justice has come to writers who, in the morning of their work, were among the great unknown. We may recall Emerson's early appreciation of Carlyle, which moved Carlyle to say he could hear only "one voice, the voice from Concord." Emerson caused to be issued here an edition of Carlyle's essays, and Carlyle returned the act of appreciation by bringing out, in 1841, a London edition of the essays of Emerson. Nowhere in literature have we had a finer story than this—a tale of recognition, each of the other, which has since been beautifully confirmed by the whole world of culture.

Emerson, said Carlyle in a preface, was perhaps not so remarkable for what he had said or done as for what he had not. With uncommon interest, Carlyle had learned that here was "one of those rare men who have, withal, the invaluable talent of sitting still." That an educated man like Emerson "should retire for long years into rustic obscurity, and, amid the all-pervading jingle of dollars, and loud chaffering of ambitions and promotions, should quietly, with cheerful deliberateness, sit down to spend his life, not in mammon worship or the hunt for reputation, influence, place, or any other advantage whatsoever, this," said that wise man

from Craigenputtoch, "when we get a notice of it, is a thing really worth noting."

Of the long effort that it cost Carlyle to get a publisher for "*Sartor Resartus*," the public well knows; but his six years' waiting with the "French Revolution" is not so familiar. In 1831 he wrote to Emerson that he might still succeed "in making some tolerable engagement—most probably with Mr. Murray"; but two weeks later: "All manner of perplexities have occurred in the publishing of my poor book. The manuscript, like an unhappy ghost, still lingers on the wrong side of Styx; the Charon of Albemarle-street durst not risk it in his *sutis cymba*; so it leaped ashore again." Still later he had reached the following depth of despair: "I have given up the notion of hawking my little manuscript book about any further; for a long time it has lain quiet in its drawer, waiting for a better day. Sad fate! to serve the devil and get no wages even from him."

Here was a man of genius, forty-two years of age, who from his youth up had given his best thought and spirit to a literary life. At the university he had been first among his fellows; and his industry in reading had been unexampled: the stories told of it would do justice to Buckle or Macaulay. Little as he did to gain attention, his splendid faculties and great acquirements for so young a man were acknowledged, and when he went away, the professors realized that their best

student had gone. Here, moreover, was a man who had already done work which to this day remains among the finest products of his mind — those matchless essays that have been more widely read perhaps than anything else he ever wrote.

Again, let us turn to Hawthorne, that chief master in prose composition whom America has produced, — in his time a veritable chief among the great unknown.

Hawthorne's early life, previous to the publication of his "Twice-Told Tales," had had for its chief pursuit during many years literary work. His known accomplishment does not by any means indicate a great amount of activity, but it is a reasonable certainty that he produced far more than the world has known. He was extremely careful of his reputation — not the reputation he had, for he had pitifully little, but the reputation he hoped to acquire. The familiar facts connected with the publication of "Fanshawe," a book earlier by eleven years than the "Twice-Told Tales," clearly indicate this. He published the book anonymously, with a prophetic quotation on the title-page, "Wilt thou go on with me?" but it was scarcely more than off the press before he did everything he could to suppress it, so that a copy in the Arnold sale sold for over \$400.

Down to his last days Hawthorne's extreme care in all he wrote continued. He left several fragments, notably "The Dolliver Romance," "Septimius Felton," and "Dr. Grimshawe's Secret," and of the latter

more than one draught. It was to one of these fragments that Longfellow referred in his poem, written soon after returning from Hawthorne's funeral:—

Ah, who shall lift that wand of magic power  
And the lost clew regain !  
The unfinished window in Aladdin's tower  
Unfinished must remain.

The beginnings of Hawthorne's literary life illustrate more forcibly than perhaps those of any other American author the difficult road which a literary genius in this country had to travel in his day. He received for these stories, contributed to *The Token*, only a few dollars each. But the collected volume of "Twice-Told Tales" will long contain about the choicest productions in the short-story line that our language has been enriched by. Between "Fanshawe" and "The Scarlet Letter" passed a period lacking only one year of a quarter of a century, and it was not until "The Scarlet Letter" appeared that anything like proper recognition came to Hawthorne, that immortal story of which Dr. Holmes wrote two lines destined to long remembrance:—

I snatch the book along whose burning leaves  
His scarlet web our wild romancer weaves.

The Old Manse of Concord, now one of the most celebrated dwellings in New England, was Hawthorne's home for three years when the world was persistently refusing to recognize the great writer who was writing for it. He piped to the world, as Curtis has remarked, and it did not dance; wept to it,



and it did not mourn. His life in this dwelling was the most secluded possible. No one in Concord knew him, save Emerson and Thoreau, and they saw him but seldom. To the ordinary citizen he was a phantom and a fable. Some people really doubted if the house was occupied at all. Upon the rare occasions when the "wild romancer" was to be seen, it was a mere glimpse caught of him putting in seeds or sedately using the hoe in his garden.

Curtis met him at a tea given at Emerson's house, where were gathered other persons of distinction. For some time he was "scarcely aware of a man who sat upon the edge of the circle, a little withdrawn, his head slightly thrown forward on his breast, and his bright eyes clearly burning under his black brow." All through the talk he sat silent as a shadow, "but looked like a kind of poetic Webster." When he went to the window and stood quietly there for a long time looking out upon the landscape, no appeal was made to him, no one looked at him; the conversation went on, and his silence was respected. Fine as were the things said by others, "much finer things were implied by the dumbness of this gentleman with heavy brows and black hair." Such was the isolation of that man of surpassing genius, — an isolation even when in the presence of his peers.

Hawthorne described himself as "the obscurest man of letters in America." When "The Scarlet Letter" was first printed and something like fame reached him, the edition numbered only 5000

copies and was not made from stereotyped plates, so little faith had the publishers in a large sale. Hawthorne had already obtained recognition, but it came only from "the saving remnant," contemporary reviews, in which it was worth something in those days to get acknowledgment, being the means of its bestowal. The *New England Magazine* for October, 1834, described him as "a writer of some of the most delicate and beautiful prose ever published on this side of the Atlantic." Henry F. Chorley, a year later, in the *London Athenæum*, acknowledged his genius and reprinted three of his stories. In 1837 the first volume of "Twice-Told Tales" had a long notice in the *North American Review*, written by Longfellow, who said it came "from the hand of a man of genius," and "everything about it has a freshness of morning and of May." His style had "exceeding beauty," and was "as clear as running waters are."

Neglect of Hawthorne came from the reading world at large, not from men competent to judge his genius, and yet it was scarcely until the last quarter of his century, when he had long been dead, that he could have been called a popular author. It was not until then that a cheap edition of his works came from the press, or that he passed into the possession of an edition *de luxe*, and so could be said to have abandoned his place as one of the great unknown.

Many of Hawthorne's stories first appeared in the *Democratic Review*, a magazine devoted to partisan

interests and published in New York. For many years it issued a series of pictures, "with pen and pencil," in which the virtues of small and large party magnates were exalted. "Father" Ritchie's face indicates one of the mildest-mannered and most amiable of men, and gives slight evidence of the force and political sagacity for which he was so long eminent, — possibly a happy stroke on the artist's part to secure him against the aspersions of opposing partisans.

More amusing still was a side, full-length view of Felix Grundy, Attorney-General under Van Buren, who was seated in a great arm-chair, his legs comfortably crossed, a pen high over his ear, spectacles on his forehead, in one hand an uplifted manuscript, a table at his side laden with papers, broken envelopes, and inkstand, an air of tremendous capacity for public affairs pervading the seated figure of Felix Grundy. Another portrait was of John Forsyth, Secretary of State under Van Buren, who stood in a portico near a large column, with hat held against the hip, one arm akimbo, the other behind his back, the right leg thrown over the left, and a face bland, satisfied, and ready for action. Mr. J. R. Poinsett appeared behind the railing of a balcony, an American flag at his side, and in the attitude of a public speaker, with hand extended as if in harangue. Mr. W. C. Rives sat in the large corner of an old-fashioned sofa. One hand held a book, with fingers between the leaves; the other, with the arm, rested carelessly on the back of the sofa, while upon his

spacious lap was spread out an enormous handkerchief.

These men all made an imposing display of legs. There were legs crossed, legs bent to rest on tiptoe, legs carelessly thrown about with the freedom that did befit the statesmen of a free country. What a good time they had of it, when patronage and place had been brought to a science, when the Albany Regency carried matters with a high hand in the North, and Edwin Croswell, with his *Argus*, "Father" Ritchie, with his *Enquirer*, and Amos Kendall, with his Kentucky newspaper, manufactured public opinion for the whole country!

Alongside these portraits were printed many of Hawthorne's short romances. The enterprising publishers made no portrait of him. Worse than all, they did not pay him for his work. Rives, Croswell, and Kendall before they died had seen their party repeatedly overthrown in a national election, and had quite outlived their reputations. But Hawthorne's fame was rising more and more. It continues still to rise, and long will. For many years these magnates have been dead and forgotten, while Hawthorne remains a vital force in the literature of his country, having made a larger contribution to its permanent glory than the men who built the Pennsylvania Railroad or the Western Union Telegraph.

How much in line with this thought is the fame of Gilbert White, of whose book edition after edition, and more than one of them resplendent, have

come forth in the past five years. Meanwhile, many authors famous in White's day are quite unread, their names known only to the curious.

White was an obscure curate, devoting his years to a garden and the fields about Selborne. There was nothing in Selborne any more than there was in scores of other English villages that should have made it a place to write a book about. Remote from great towns, it stood unknown. White himself was even less known. His own townsmen had scarcely any acquaintance with him. To the most of them he was incomprehensible, with those strange, silent, industrious ways of his, doing work that promised no reward, the most unworldly of men.

And yet it is White who has done for Selborne what no other man has done for a small village by writing about its natural history, — made it world-famous, and made himself one to whom a statue might well be lifted up. Stratford, Ecclefechan, Alloway, Concord, — these are villages to which has fallen renown, because greater writers were born in them or lived in them. Selborne's renown is due to Selborne's story, as an obscure curate told it, — a story of natural history, set down with care, simplicity, and love.

The great unknown, I have called these men, because unknown in their own day to the great masses of readers. Meanwhile the world has possessed another type of the great unknown, — writers widely read by the masses but who have remained strangers to "the saving remnant." In recent years we have



thought of Kipling, Hall Caine, Howells, Sienkiewicz, Stockton, Churchill, when successful authors were under discussion. But it is not these who have been most widely read. Twenty years ago, when all the world was reading Longfellow or Tennyson, Howells or Charles Reade, an author was writing in Brooklyn, of whom the upper world knew absolutely nothing. Under a pseudonym (which shall be nameless here) he numbered readers by many, many thousands. His stories went into scores of homes where Howells' have gone into one, and great was his reward.

These conditions have not been peculiar to America. They are true also in England, where in cheap weekly papers, or in cheap paper-bound volumes, authors unknown to Mayfair and Belgravia, to stately country homes and to seashore resorts, have found readers by hundreds of thousands. There was the author of "Gideon Giles," which in its day had more readers than "Vanity Fair" or "Henry Esmond," "David Copperfield" or "Our Mutual Friend," and which at one bound sent the circulation of the paper in which it appeared from 100,000 copies per week to 500,000. Its author's name is now overwhelmed in forgetfulness. There, too, was the creator of "Jack Harkaway," whose stories were universally popular in their time, but are now unknown and I believe unprinted.

In France the same has been true. Émile Richebourg was probably the most successful of them all — these widely known and widely unknown writers.

Richebourg wrote stories for a Paris newspaper that had the largest circulation of all French papers. His readers were of the lower classes, and what we call *tout Paris* knew him not. He wrote tales of adventure, mystery, pathos, and virtue in humble walks of life. Poverty and merit at his hands always found their appropriate reward. His newspaper once substituted for him a new author, whose fame had literally gone to the ends of the earth, — Jules Verne. It printed "Michael Strogoff," and the result was a loss of 80,000 readers in one week. Back then came Richebourg in triumph, and back in his train came the lost readers.

Robert Burns might die in ignoble poverty and Poe in direst want. Wordsworth might live all his days in a humble cottage and Carlyle seek in vain for a publisher. But as narrators of highly sensational tales, such as our Brooklyn writer, the two Englishmen, and the Frenchman narrated, the world willingly has paid with munificent alacrity. Time, however, has brought sweet revenges. The elect of this world of literature eventually get their reward, and an exceeding great reward it is. They, as great unknown, become in due time world-famous men, having written not for a day, or for a generation, but for all time, and who are of

those immortal dead who live again  
In minds made better by their presence.

The foregoing remarks are true when applied to the most widely circulated magazines. Those maga-

zines which are most famous, whose names are familiar to every one, are not the magazines most widely circulated. Statistics on the subject may appall us. We have commonly thought of a certain monthly publication in Philadelphia as the only one which far outstripped the older monthlies, but it is only one among several. And the strangest fact about the statistics is that the magazines in question are unknown to thousands of readers to whom the older monthlies have been household works. In Washington, for example, has been published a monthly periodical devoted to household matters, that has been credited with a circulation of 150,000 copies. In Boston there has been one with 116,000; in Springfield, Ohio, one with 260,000, and in New York one with 380,000. Not one of these publications would be recognized at the Authors' Club as familiar to its members. Nor are they familiar to the desks of literary editors in New York or talked about in newspapers. The world of literature, properly so called, moves on, unheeding them, caring for them not.

For readers of these periodicals and for readers of Richebourg and the others named, how many books stamped with the final approval of the world's best regard, for several generations have remained wholly unknown — books, for example, like Montaigne's and Burton's, of which the finest minds never get weary. Montaigne and the letters of Howell, said Thackeray, "are my bedside books." These authors "talk

about themselves," he added, "and don't weary me." He loved to read them when awakened from his night sleep. Dr. Holmes was especially fond of Burton, and had read him, as one of the "means for insuring peaceful slumber at the right time and enough of it." He was his "mental night-cap," and he had read him for a quarter or half hour before going to bed. He thus consumed a year or more in going through the folio edition of 1676.

What impressed him particularly in Burton was the frequency with which he found his own thoughts and sayings anticipated. It was probably this quality in Burton — his immense humanity, his power of feeling and expressing sentiments common to good or strong minds — that made Dr. Johnson say he was the only author with whom he was acquainted who could get him out of bed several hours before he wished to rise. When Emerson had read Montaigne it seemed to him that he had himself written the book in some former life, so correctly did it voice his thought and experience. Perhaps Dr. Holmes should not have been surprised to find Burton speaking so forcibly to his own thoughts and experience. There are always between the true humorists points of strong alliance. Sterne appreciated Burton with all the heartiness of Dr. Johnson or Byron or Dr. Holmes. But Sterne stole from him. This was because Burton, in a way, voiced his thought and experience. He may well have felt as if he had himself written the book in some former life.

## V

### YELLOW JOURNALISM IN LITERATURE

IT is not many years since reports of book sales from the chief centres of the United States named "Quo Vadis" as leading all other books. Reports from some thirty centres all made substantially the same showing. In twenty-one of them "Quo Vadis" was first, and in the others second or third. But where is "Quo Vadis" now?

This story has been called a pot-boiler. Admirers of its author said from the start that it was inferior to Sienkiewicz's earlier writings, — inferior as literature, and as a contribution to historical knowledge. "Quo Vadis" was not a story to be read aloud in mixed company. What ought to have been the first test of it, thus became the final one. It tells no wholesome tale. Humanity there seen is humanity in its degradation.

From one end of the land to another for many years has come a long and pathetic cry against the methods of what we call "yellow journalism." But here we had a book describing scenes, giving conversations, and painting manners, such as no newspaper in all this land would present in the same colours, the same language, the same vivid portraiture.



No tale ever told of the most immoral life found in a great city ever yet has equalled in literalness, in precision, in actual nakedness, some of the occurrences Sienkiewicz described. The book went into more than 200,000 homes. But there were no pulpit orators to condemn it as they condemn newspapers. Should more be required of newspapers than of books? May book publishers commit greater sins against public morality than newspaper publishers? It is impossible to see why an age denouncing stories of immoral life when printed in newspapers should tolerate them when printed in books.

The marvel indeed grows that the public will read and applaud in a bound book the same sort of license that it condemns in a newspaper. Unquestionably a bad book can do more harm than a bad newspaper. Its influence is more silent and insidious; the reader is more alone; the poison makes its way with far less resistance.

Because the story Sienkiewicz gave in "Quo Vadis" had a historical basis, because authorities on the period commended it as in the main accurate, the book escaped general censure. Its truthfulness to fact was accepted as sufficient reason for tolerating the hideousness of the picture painted. The worst articles that get into the newspapers are also truthful as to fact,—truthful to the point of repulsiveness. Stories of debauchery and crime are narrated with the most careful fidelity to actual occurrences, and

are the worse for the public in exact measure as they are most accurate.

Sienkiewicz is not our sole offender; nor is he our greatest. Moreover, he is not the only writer who has chosen Rome for the scene of the frightful depravity he depicts. But Sienkiewicz dealt with the Rome of Nero. Another offender deals with the Rome of our own day. The Italian writer named D'Annunzio has risen high in the literary firmament in late years. His topics are ever the same,—human crime and wretchedness, desolate homes and divided families, as the outcome of ignoble passion. We may fancy in middle life that we have heard of, or have observed, about all that the world contains of depravity and self-imposed misery, but in the pages of D'Annunzio are sounded depths such as few that aim to lead sane lives have dreamed of.

Had D'Annunzio any laudable purpose to serve, his books might find a reason for existence. He holds up frightful examples, but he does not hold them up as an active moralist. Here lies his error, and here the offence he commits. After reading him, common objects in life assume unfamiliar charm and beauty; the green fields and the blue sky surround us as a benediction. One advantage derived from him is that when we put away his books toil is sweeter and oppressive care loses something of its weary weight.

Need I name here certain books of later date in which immoral conduct forms, if not the whole mo-

tive force, at least the chief attraction and the prime secret of their popularity? Two at least might be named; but both were written by women, and so let their names pass. Among the most popular books of this year and a recent year have they been. No pulpit orator has, I believe, assailed them, nor did they fail to find publishers whose standing in the community is of the highest.

The year that has seen these writers forge so well to the front produced other ephemeral books, ranking among the most widely read. None of them in any reasonable understanding of values possessed a title to eminence as literature. Provided we take the larger view and bring into the reckoning the future as well as the present, first rank in those years would have been bestowed upon the Browning letters and the Stevenson letters, of which not more than 15,000 copies each have, I believe, yet been sold. A far smaller sale has come to another book that belongs to this same recent period. Perhaps not more than one or two thousand copies have yet been called for.

I refer to the "Journals" of Audubon, the friend of all four-footed creatures and all birds. These "Journals" make in printed form two volumes, of about 450 pages each. They take the reader into almost every part of this country and into European lands. While reading them he dwells in the finest mental atmosphere, whether it be the habits of animals Audubon writes about or meetings he has had

with Francis Jeffrey, Sir Walter Scott, Sir Thomas Lawrence, and Cuvier.

Strange had been the history of these papers. One of them not many years ago was found in the back of an old secretary; another in a barn on Staten Island. Researches for material had been made for years by his granddaughter, Maria R. Audubon, in New Orleans, San Domingo, France, and elsewhere, resulting in the finding of material five times more than was printed. In these volumes we have not only Audubon's life, but local history and frontier life depicted, Daniel Boone's later times illustrated, the toil, the knowledge, the splendid spirit of one of the most inspiring men in our annals, unfolded in his own language.

When "Quo Vadis" is unread, and its very title forgotten, these "Journals" of Audubon will still hold their place secure. Such is the importance of a real man's devoted and memorable achievements, as compared with a mere piece of erotic fiction. Nothing so well endures in this world as authentic records of worthy deeds, whether they be those of Leonidas or Bruno, of Jean d'Arc or Scott, of Lincoln or Audubon.

## VI

### COURTS OF APPEAL

AMONG things that may safely be called difficult is giving advice in reading books — giving it wisely and feeling sure it will be used. This world of books has vast amplitude, and the needs and tastes of readers are widely varied. So many things must be known before definite advice can be undertaken; and these things are sometimes impossible to know. One may deal in general propositions, and then feel entirely safe; but general propositions will not satisfy readers. They are apt to leave them as much in the dark as they were before. Indeed, what one says may contain nothing that the reader does not feel he already knew. He will then go away a sadder but not a wiser man.

Carlyle and Frederic Harrison are notable among writers who have undertaken something in these directions. Probably their influence has been potent in directing the minds of readers away from ephemeral books and centring them for a time on the books that last through generations of men; more than that they did not do. Few who have descended from general truths to particular instances can be said to have been well rewarded. Readers who have



been directed, we will say, to Milton, Scott, Gibbon, Wordsworth, and Byron, would perhaps report that two or three of these writers charmed their emotional natures or inspired their understanding, but the others brought them no message of consolation, no argosy of knowledge. It is even worse where advice pertains to books of lesser rank, and worst of all when it pertains to current literature. It is a wise man indeed who can be certain of his ground when he steps into those boggy meadows, or tries to find a way about in those tangled thickets.

The most serious aspect of the task presents itself to the professional reviewer of the day's literature. Fortunately for Carlyle and Mr. Harrison they were able to escape responsibility for dealing with books the world had not yet tried. It is the fate of reviewers that they can take no refuge in the great writers of past ages. They cannot deal with principles and verdicts fixed and eternal, but must at once confront a proposition lying right before them — Is this new book worth reading? Sometimes they go right; quite often they go wrong; for it is in the long run, not the critic, however gifted, who determines what shall be the fate of any book, but that wise and great public, which in all times has reserved to itself the inalienable right to determine it.

It is probably the fault of most reviewers that they fail to look beyond their own taste, — fail, that is, so to project themselves into the common intelligence as to know what the popular judgment will be. But

there can never exist a guide for readers that shall approach anywhere near infallibility. The history of criticism will show that its greatest services have been, not in severe and searching examination of books, but in making the public know what books worth its attention had newly come into existence. Actual guides critics were not, and will not be. Let us call them rather heralds, their duties ceasing when the procession starts.

Learned literary criticism of an eminence strictly authoritative has almost ceased to exist. In the past there were giants, the Whipples, the Lowells, the Ripleys, to mention only our own. But can it be maintained that the public has met with irreparable losses? Literary history contains few things more interesting than the ways in which criticism has gone astray—the failures to recognize genius when it appeared, the unfavourable verdicts passed upon work destined to favourable acceptance from the public. These examples help to illustrate forcibly the uncertain value, the chronic fallibility, of all criticism as a court of appeal.

One very distinguished reviewer failed to discover greatness in "The Scarlet Letter." Perhaps as many as twenty missed the genius disclosed in "Sartor Resartus." How fine is the example Hawthorne's writings afford of the failure of critics, good or bad, to make or unmake them. Praise itself could not create popularity for those works in Hawthorne's day. It has been through the slow process of time,

the certain verdict of the English-speaking race itself, that this inspired genius has been placed on the pedestal from which none can dislodge him.

It has come within the experience of most book-sellers and publishers to observe books of high merit which have made their way, regardless of praise or blame, in any public place, — books which have triumphantly passed the ordeal of criticism, whether of sweeping condemnation or of perfunctory praise. They made their way in spite of all that was said or not said; praise denied or praise bestowed; and in spite of notoriety conferred by newspapers. Often these were books by authors never heard of before. Perhaps they had been published anonymously and were books with which the publishers began with little faith. One shining example we have in a book now historic in many ways that was long hawked about London in vain for a publisher, one over which the publisher who finally took it, on noting its cold reception from the public, uttered many a groan; but a work now famous as are few books of recent times, — Carlyle's "Sartor Resartus."

Again, to take a book of our own day and one of the most widely read, — Mr. Ford's "The Honourable Peter Stirling." Its success illustrates how to a work of some distinct merit recognition will come eventually, whatever may have been its early fate. Mr. Ford's success certainly was not made by the critics. They had all reviewed his book and in the main favourably; but it made no special headway

until long afterward, when a demand started up in San Francisco, spreading thence through the Middle West, and now it still spreads. Here we see how there had grown up an army of book readers, remote from great centres of life and trade, and independent of critics and newspaper notoriety in determining the fate of a book.

After all that may be said, criticism remains a matter largely of individual opinion. That opinion may not necessarily be founded in prejudice, neither for nor against the work in hand; but it very commonly results from an individual notion of what literature is or ought to be. Even with the highest order of minds, we often see what this means when we find well-endowed men who acknowledge an indifference to writers on whom time has set its fixed seal. This was curiously illustrated many years ago, when Oliver Wendell Holmes undertook to write a life of Emerson. Dr. Holmes was probably the least fitted of his contemporaries to write about Emerson. His intellectual obtuseness with respect to Emerson produced painful results.

The truth is, and it should be oftener acknowledged, that there exists no recognized court of opinion — certainly no court of final appeal, in so far as any chosen body of cultured men may constitute one. One court alone exists in the world, — the tribunal of time. Criticism may go right or may go wrong; a whole generation may neglect or condemn a book; the book, in fact, may become scarce and

almost forgotten ; but if it have within its covers the seeds of immortal life, Time will save it, and a tribunal greater than critics will fix its place and forever hold it there. That tribunal is the central heart of cultured mankind.

Criticism in itself is not a high form of literature, and it is proper that it should not be. When it shines at all, it shines as by a borrowed light. It must always be an ephemeral thing. Some of the strongest, most virile criticism ever produced was that of Hazlitt ; but how few read Hazlitt now ! In our own century Lowell reached the highest altitudes, but I cannot believe that his critical writings will be often read far down this century. Lowell's letters will outlive them all, — those charming personal compositions, in which he put so much of learning, so much of wit and insight, so much even of life itself. In them we see a man deeply learned and widely cultured, but with all that a real, living, working man, now at his tasks, now at his play.

Criticism possesses stronger intellectual interest for cultivated minds than any other form of writing, except the actually creative. But this interest springs from the few, not the many. For the many critical writings are almost unread books. In the period when they flourished best, it was the few who read them and for whom they were produced. Times have changed. The number of readers has enormously increased since Hazlitt's days ; it has been augmented very notably since Lowell wrote. With



this has come a corresponding increase in the number of books published,—so great a multiplication that we now have this flood where formerly there was only a gently flowing stream. But for critical writings there has scarcely been an increase commensurate with the general increase in books.

In the increase in the number of readers who are well educated and in the number of books published are found conditions which have materially altered the occupation of the book reviewer. Formerly he addressed himself to a small, select class who needed not so much to be led into habits of wise and profitable reading as to be entertained with criticism more sharp and learned than their own. In our day we find a vast multitude of new readers, eager for knowledge and impatient to acquire it; their minds as practical as the age in which they live, their understandings virile and competent; who seek not so much for scholarly criticism as for information as to what books exist in current literature that can have any interest and value for them. An absorbing self-confidence is theirs. They would read the books for themselves, and form their own conclusions, meanwhile bestowing a gracious "thank you" on the critic, who, in the old way, would form conclusions for them.

In these circumstances shall the critics yield up their office, try to dam the flood, or seek for some means by which to guide the public in its perilous journey down the flood? Here we have some vast

literary Mississippi that is forever spreading out beyond its true borders, overflowing fertile lands, and submerging homes and those who dwell in them. Where lies the course of wisdom for the literary periodicals and for those who conduct them? Shall they beat the air with protests sure to be made in vain? Shall they cry aloud at the flood and spread still wider the public alarm, bringing fright, consternation, and perhaps drowning to the helpless multitude along shore or in the rushing stream? Or shall they aim, with such thoughtful care and calm foresight as God gives them, to build a craft that is seaworthy, and pilot down the channel all who will come on board?

While the flood rises and pours along its way, does it remain worth while to select the bad and condemn them, when to condemn is so often merely to attract attention to them and enlarge the number of their readers? Is there not a better course to be found in choosing such as are good, and directing the public mind toward them? For books essentially bad can better condemnation be found than eloquent silence? any condemnation that will be more effective? any that will keep the bad in that obscurity in which it is best that they remain?

In this view the course of those who direct criticism will be to choose the books that have real value and some actual utility in the life of man to-day. To these, chosen from the great mass, and

making perhaps ten per cent of the whole output, they can give attention. Let their motive be to inform readers with clearness and good judgment as to the contents of those books. In the main all this will mean that the reviews will not be unfavourable. Dealing, as the articles will, with books having at least some temporary value, there will be in most cases commendation.

Under this system readers will have their attention called to books that have any claims to notice, and with readers will rest the final verdict, the ultimate judgment, which may well be depended upon as time passes to determine which books are destined for a day and which for a longer time. As said, it is always in the central heart of mankind that books have found that court of judges who will make or unmake their fame and fortune. In time the enduring verdict will come. That verdict, moreover, will be just and unimpeachable, beyond the power of critics, however gifted, to impair or reverse.

## VII

### IMPOSSIBLE ACADEMIES

A CURIOUS literary interest is the interest which men and women periodically take in proposals to establish in England or America an Academy modelled after the one of France. About once in ten years some one revives such a project, and promptly gets up a list of members. The step seems a natural outcome of the state of literature—the tremendous output and the rising fortunes of authors. The most recent offender is the London literary paper which itself bears the name of *Academy*, and from which wiser literary enterprises have usually proceeded.

As in most other cases of the kind, the *Academy* undertook to supply a list of proper members for this possible collection of Forty Immortals. Ten years before, when another London paper did the same thing, there was a difference in the methods by which the list was obtained. The *Academy's* list was prepared by a vote of the staff of the paper; the one ten years before, by a vote of readers, the paper being the *Pall Mall Gazette*. What is particularly interesting in the two lists is the extent to which names were common in both.

There are nineteen names that appeared in both, as follows : —

- |                         |                      |
|-------------------------|----------------------|
| 1. John Ruskin.         | 11. R. D. Blackmore. |
| 2. W. E. Gladstone.     | 12. W. W. Skeat.     |
| 3. Herbert Spencer.     | 13. W. E. H. Lecky.  |
| 4. Duke of Argyll.      | 14. S. R. Gardiner.  |
| 5. A. C. Swinburne.     | 15. Bishop Stubbs.   |
| 6. J. H. McCarthy.      | 16. Andrew Lang.     |
| 7. John Morley.         | 17. Edmund Gosse.    |
| 8. Sir G. O. Trevelyan. | 18. Austin Dobson.   |
| 9. Leslie Stephen.      | 19. W. S. Gilbert.   |
| 10. George Macdonald.   |                      |

Fault could not readily have been found with this list. Many names were conspicuously fit, and none could be called conspicuously unfit. Were an Academy actually to be established here or in England, and were it certain that names as worthy as these would always secure the necessary votes, an Academy might be tolerated, inimical though our institutions are to such projects. But the certainty is that no such wise selection could be depended on. Even more than in France would gross inequalities exist in the merits of members; even more than in France would modest worth suffer at the hands of immodest mediocrity. An institution conceived for the purpose of doing honour to genius would all too often become the medium of honours to mere talent, commonplace and aggressive.

But apart from this danger is the circumstance that no place exists in our society for such an institution. The world of literature itself is the



purest possible democracy; the able and the strong are sure of their reward in that land of equal opportunities, just as the feeble and the pretentious are certain to get no more than to them belongs. Circumstances favoured, and in some degree forced, an Academy upon the free domain of letters in France. Founded in monarchical times by a strong man, to whom liberty was an impossible conception, literature itself had little to do with its coming into existence. Here or in England to-day the case would be changed. Literature and those who follow literature would be responsible for the step.

And responsible for what? For the founding of an institution in which caste had been set up in the domain of letters, in which men without requisite merit, possessed of "pulls," would acquire rank above those who had all the merit needed, but not the "pulls."

Doubtless it will not be long before the scheme is revived again. These matters run in cycles, and a new list is quite due. It has been idle heretofore to urge that in France the Academy survives because it has become historic and venerated, and of which the destruction now would be an act of desecration, quite as fit to horrify the public as the demolition of the Louvre or Versailles. Wise men, even in France, understand how slight is the value which membership in it has as testimony to literary rank. They will never forget those immortals in French literature

(immortals in history, if not Immortals in their own day) who never were admitted to membership in the Academy; nor can they forget in what utter failure of contemporary recognition the greatest books have often been written — Dante's, Milton's, Shakespeare's.

Shakespeare's? What a story lies here to tell! Not many years ago an English gentleman, Mr. Charles Clement Walker, erected, at his own expense, in the yard of the parish church of St. Mary the Virgin, in that part of London known distinctively as "the city," a monument to John Heminge and Henry Condell, and on its face recorded the debt that Shakespeare and the world at large owe them forever. Carlyle, addressing an English audience, once referred to Shakespeare as "the grandest thing we have yet done." He questioned whether there existed any million of Englishmen whom England might not with greater wisdom give up rather than the Stratford peasant; and then, as if to apply the supreme test, inquired whether, instead of Shakespeare, England might not better surrender her Indian Empire. The men to whom England owes possession of India — Clive, Hastings, and all the others — long since had acquired fame among the makers of England's territorial empire. But the memories of the men to whom we owe the preservation of Shakespeare's writings — the men who secured that priceless acquisition for England's intellectual empire — for almost three centuries remained unhonoured and well-nigh forgotten.

Except for the pious and loving conduct of Heminge and Condell—fellow-actors with Shakespeare and his surviving partners in the Globe Theatre—the world must have failed to secure the first folio edition of the poet's works. To contemplate what a loss that would have been is appalling. It means that great numbers of the plays would have remained unpublished, and probably would have perished altogether. Shakespeare made no mention of his plays in his will, and never had a thought of their publication, for in his time it was not the custom to publish plays. When Ben Jonson went contrary to custom and issued some of his own plays, he was ridiculed for calling them his "workes." Indeed, Heminge and Condell, in bringing out the first folio, felt under the necessity of apologizing for their conduct. With all the sweetness and affection that animates their preface—"We have done an office to the dead, . . . without ambition either of self-profit or fame; only to keep the memory of so worthy a Friend and fellow alive, as was our Shakespeare"—there is a kind of pathos to start tears.

Profit from sales of the folio, there could have been none, either for editors or printers, since nine years passed ere a second folio was undertaken. Only a pound was charged for the book,—a pound for a volume now worth, when in fairly good condition, the price of an excellent farm, or from six to eight thousand dollars. Heminge and Condell, moreover, parted with what was valuable property to them, for

in publishing the plays they made it possible for rival theatres to use them.

They surely gave one of the highest evidences of friendship, a friendship beautiful with unquestionable love. But theirs was more than friendship. It was the ability to recognize a great man once they were in his presence, — an ability which few contemporaries shared with them, and which it is certain that an Academy would not have shared. Ben Jonson knew how near he had lived to greatness, or what he called “the wonder of our age.” Heminge and Condell knew it; but how small would be the complete list of those who were equally wise in their day and generation.

## VIII

### MODERN EDITING

COINCIDENT with an increase in books has been the development of the art of editing old books. From this source comes the large volume of reprints—a volume that increases and in which is to be found the chief consolation in the enormous output. Shakespeare, in the eighteenth century, found several editors and sorely needed them; scores have descended upon him since, and to this need in Shakespeare's case we must probably date the later rise of the art to a distinct place among literary accomplishments. How widespread its practice now is need not be specified; every man of letters may be assumed to have had some hand at it; but the services it has rendered to literature are seldom well understood and have been infrequently recognized.

Its best influence has probably been seen in the improvement in the methods which authors themselves employ to make their books more accessible, by means of suggestive and useful tables of contents, intelligent page captions, and proper indexes. Here the changes wrought in recent decades have been striking. Looking back over a period of not more than



thirty years, one may recall notable examples of actual genius in this sort of work, — examples that must still be exerting potent influences upon men whose business it is to put books together.

First among them should stand George Birkbeck Hill, the editor of Boswell. Dr. Hill has been an enthusiast regarding Johnson. Perhaps this is not remarkable, since there had been Johnson enthusiasts before him. Enthusiasts over Johnson as a writer, however, were mainly of a former generation. It is now the fashion to neglect and discredit him, and in no large sense of the word is Johnson any longer an author read. For one who reads his poems, possesses or ever saw his dictionary, for one familiar with his prose writings, there are ten who know their Boswell and perhaps as many who read Pope.

Johnson the man potently survives; not Johnson the author. Dr. Hill's courage therefore deserves exceptional credit. Nothing within the range of modern editorial industry has exceeded the industry bestowed by him on Johnson. If his labours go inadequately rewarded, and even if they go unappreciated by such as would reward them if they only could, the fault will be the fault of others than himself. He has worked for Johnson nobly and with singleness of heart worthy of Johnson himself. Doubtless he is quite indifferent to rewards, except the rewards which, with their exceeding greatness, literature herself bestows.

Dr. Hill has given us an edition of Boswell that

supersedes all others; it is rich beyond the dreams of avarice in new information, and as monumental, loving, and exhaustive a work as was ever performed for any book in our language. He has laid us under further obligations by producing a final edition of "Rasselas," and by preparing a compilation of the wit and wisdom of Johnson, which forms an extremely readable collection of observations, good alike to read of a morning before the day's duties are faced, and of an evening ere sleep subdues and restores the faculties; for of all writers Johnson is the most bracing.

Until a few years ago the writings of Washington were as much in need of a new editor as ever Shakespeare's were. Original manuscripts had been tampered with seriously, and there had come to light a vast store of new and significant material. Our demands of editors and publishers had much altered since the times of Jared Sparks. Textual integrity and the whole story have been exacted with relentless precision. Discretion in an editor has ceased to have the meaning it had formerly, scrupulous devotion to the text has so greatly modified the nature and extent of his function.

The custom of abusing Sparks when opportunity offers fails to take sufficient account of this change. He lived in times different from ours. Not only was he hampered by the limited mass of material then accessible; the needs and requirements of the public imposed limitations upon him. These were of the simplest kind. Irving's commendation of Sparks

illustrates this. For the most part the work of Sparks was pioneer work in the truest sense. We can only appreciate the extent and value of it all when we consider the state our history would be in if he had failed to do the work which we are now wont to abuse him for not doing better.

It was a pleasure to see that Mr. Worthington C. Ford appreciated the office Sparks really filled and adorned. He made due acknowledgment of his indebtedness to him, and recognized the obstacles that lay in Sparks's path. Mr. Ford's own plan differed radically from that of Sparks. He chose to print the writings as they were written. His edition, like the portrait Cromwell wanted, gives the writings in their exact form, "warts and all." Many departures from correct orthography are therefore to be found; many curious structures in the way of sentences, and much original punctuation.

Viewed from the standpoints of scholarship and research to-day, positive gains have resulted from this method. What is most important, is that we can now see Washington more as he was. There can be no doubt that Sparks's way deprived the writings of a large part of their human interest. The half-legendary hero that Washington had become to his countrymen is probably to be attributed in no small measure to Sparks. He never desired us to see that Washington possessed the frailties of his species. As Mr. Ford pointed out, the young colonel doing hard work and fruitless service against the Indians

and French was made to write like an experienced man in the closing decade of the eighteenth century. He appears never to have had a youth.

All this Mr. Ford has changed. Besides Washington as patriot, soldier, and statesman, he helps us to see him as a man. We are able to know him better, and our love, we may be sure, has not of necessity undergone change. Natural intuition teaches us all that every man possesses in his composition a good deal of human nature. Paragons of virtue and talent adorn works of fiction very acceptably sometimes, but in sober actual life their pretensions may be safely received with incredulity. For these reasons alone, apart from others more to the taste of scholars, the appearance of Mr. Ford's fourteen octavos was watched with continuous and undiminished interest. Except for his work, it is unlikely that his brother, Paul Leicester Ford, could ever have written his important and much read book, "The True George Washington."

Mr. Ford, in his volume on "The True George Washington," developed an interesting phase of that modern investigation into the characters of eminent men from which we learn how the human side of them was not, after all, essentially different from the human side of scores of their contemporaries. They were neither better nor worse than many respected men who reached no eminence at all. Mr. Ford aimed not at the feat called whitewashing, but rather the reverse. He presented



Washington not as a personification of virtues, but as a human being with many human limitations.

Meanwhile certain men whom the world has generally condemned have been presented to us as not so bad as they have been represented; apart from their relations to public affairs, we are assured that they possessed estimable traits. Professor H. Morse Stephens, reviewing the work of a French writer, has presented Marat in a favourable light. Marat's medical degree was from Edinburgh; his taste in science and literature was elevated; his love of the people sincere, his opposition to aristocrats dictated by real public spirit. More recently Philip II. has been held up as a "good husband, a tender father, an affectionate brother, and a patient, kindly master," whereas Froude represented Philip's English wife as having a "parched heart thirsting for affection," and as "flinging herself on a breast to which an iceberg was warm, upon a man to whom love was an unmeaning word, except as the most brutal of passions." The champion of Philip was Major Martin Hume, who cited the letters of courtiers, ambassadors, and others, who describe him as a devoted and attentive husband to Mary, and as a husband whose three wives all adored him, the last one, a girl not half his age, writing to her own mother in the most satisfied terms possible. Major Hume presented clear proof that to his own children Philip was an attentive and charming parent, personally interested in their amusements and in the



clothes they wore. All of which shows that a man may have one public character and another private one; that he may hunt heresy with the sword and send an armada to destroy England, and yet have a gentle, affectionate nature at his own fireside.

Mr. Ford's volume has corrected what remained of the false impressions created by Sparks, who sought to present a flawless hero. Thanks to Mr. Ford we have an explanation of the origin of Washington's eccentric spelling, know that he never ceased to admire fine women, that he could make a joke, and that to carry an election he did not scruple to provide strong drink for his constituents. Carlyle should have lived to read Mr. Ford's book. He might then have revised his estimate and abandoned that suggestive way he had of alluding to Washington patronizingly as "George."

Services scarcely less notable have been rendered to one of the greatest of English poets, in the edition of Byron's works, published under the sanction and with the assistance of Byron's grandson, the Earl of Lovelace, son of Ada, "sole daughter of my house and heart." The new letters prove highly important. In the first volume are 168, nearly all of them written by Byron, and nearly one-half new, while the four volumes comprise 1198 letters, of which only 561 were printed by Moore. One of the most curious is from Byron's father, and was written in France when he had taken refuge there from his creditors. Of his wife Captain Byron said, "She is very amiable at a

distance, but I defy you and all the apostles to live with her two months ;” and of his son, “I am happy to hear that he is well, but for his walking, it is impossible, as he is club-footed.”

Probably our modern admiration for the man who turns phrases cleverly has led us away from a writer never careful about such matters. Byron was another name for energy and fire. He was nothing if not life and power. Never lived another English poet who wrote such “thoughts that breathe,” such “words that burn.” His day will come again when heroes stalk abroad. Had America found in Spain a foeman worthy of her steel, it might come now ; but who could look for heroes in a war where on the one side was a people talking like Don Quixote, while its admirals ran into landlocked harbours to await an enemy that could crush its fleet as one might crush an eggshell in the hand ? Wars when Byron wrote were between titans, and the verse of Byron was inspired by an energy titanic. In piping times of peace we cannot hope to see him restored to primacy, nor in times of war if only a great power has the easy task of crushing a feeble, fallen state.

Byron belonged to a romantic age, an age of expansion, of new freedom and hopes for the human race. If he did not voice this as acceptably as Coleridge and Wordsworth did in some of their earlier verse, he was a splendid embodiment of that new spirit of personal independence, that assertion of individuality, which followed in its train. We may

say that Byron wrote too rapidly to write always well, that he often showed not what liberty could do, but how license could run ; but there remained in him the true masterful energy of a great spirit, the passion of a strong and indomitable soul, a breadth and grandeur to which poetic genius seldom has risen in the literature of any tongue.

Next should be mentioned the services Edmund Gosse rendered to Gray. Perhaps the most remarkable thing about his edition of Gray is the fact that it, or the like of it, should have waited so long to make its appearance ; it is the only complete edition that has ever been issued. Gray died in 1771, and his fame, as the author of what is perhaps the most widely known short poem in our language, had long ago spread into every nook and corner of the English-speaking world. Meanwhile books by foreign authors had had translation after translation, and edition after edition of them had been prepared. The lives of Shakespeare, Milton, Byron, and many other poets had, at the same time, been exhaustively written and rewritten from all points of view, and their works in complete editions had been printed scores of times. But with Gray no one, until Mr. Gosse, thought it worth while to take up either the task of relating his life adequately or the task of publishing his works in a form that, with proper regard for truth and exactness, could be called complete. When the memoir was published, any one who read it with knowledge of the subject saw clearly enough how

admirably the career of Gray had been treated ; they saw, moreover, what a void in literary history had suddenly been filled.

For many years belief had existed that a mass of unpublished works by Gray still awaited the industry of the explorer, and this fact, combined with Mr. Gosse's accomplishments and the shocking conditions in which the published works had always been presented, pointed to Mr. Gosse as the man who ought to undertake the task of rehabilitating—or perhaps it would be more accurate and just to say the task of habilitating—the author of the “Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard.” The result was Mr. Gosse's edition of Gray, the only one worth a man's time and money to purchase.

In the first place, it is the only one in which the poetical and prose works are printed together. In the second, it is the only one which contains all the prose works that had heretofore been printed, to say nothing of prose writings which were known to exist but which had not been published. In the third, it is the only one that supplies all the known works in verse, and gives, what we believe no former single edition ever gave, all the variations of the “Elegy,” all the suppressed stanzas, and all three of the extant versions. This, indeed, ought to be a sufficiently formidable catalogue of virtues. Were it necessary to descend to minor points on which editors have often justified a new edition of an author's works, it would be easy to prolong the list. It is proper,



then, to say that Mr. Gosse laid the literary world under heavy debt to him, and we need have no sort of doubt that for the painstaking and singularly laborious nature of his achievement he has had his reward in the substantial and impressive fact that his name henceforth will be associated long with Gray's.

Former editors aided Mr. Gosse only in slight ways. There were only two who might have aided him, the first being Mason and the second Mitford. The former was an inordinately vain man, and amazingly deficient in literary conscience, while the latter, though in most ways superior to his predecessor, had the misfortune to live in what Mr. Gosse calls "the dark ages of bibliography."

Mr. Gosse's edition contains only a limited amount of new matter — far less, he frankly owns, than he had hoped to make it. He slowly became convinced that no such treasures as had been hinted at exist. Again and again he had been on the brink of discovery, and "each time the prose has proved a cloud, the poems a mirage." But, for all this, the edition is of the highest importance to students of English literature. Gray's works no longer suffer, on the one hand, from editorial chaos, or on the other, from editorial incapacity and high-handedness.

Mr. Alfred Ainger has done as great service to the writings of Charles Lamb. Indeed, he is almost an ideal editor. With another author, and an author belonging to some more distant age, he might have succeeded less completely, but with Lamb he wholly



succeeded. He was amply equipped for his undertaking. He had long been a clergyman attached in some greater or less capacity to the Temple Church. Sympathy with Lamb's sentiment was therefore easy, and knowledge of his life and works was quite thrust in his way. He obviously could not have approached the subject in any task-burdened or merely perfunctory manner; nor has he done so. The work has been done *con amore*. The sum of Mr. Ainger's labours in connection with Lamb is by no means represented in one or two volumes. His memoir of Lamb is an admirable piece of work, and unquestionably the best biography of Lamb that we have. Besides this, he has edited, with instructive introductions and useful notes, the essays and other writings of Lamb, making an edition destined to acceptance as final.

Work closely allied to editing of the class referred to is that of making anthologies, and here (with apologies to Mr. Stedman, who has come later), Palgrave must not be overlooked. Palgrave has the unique distinction of having acquired, merely by compiling an anthology, a degree of literary reputation such as comes only to authors who write very successful books. Palgrave, indeed, is known where many authors, properly to be called successful, are not known. His modest volume, "The Golden Treasury of the Best Songs and Lyrics in the English Language," was published nearly forty years ago. Such has been its reput-

that not to know it is to argue one's self strangely unfamiliar with the books of the generations now past. Not only has the book gone through edition after edition, but it has given its name to one of the most successful series of books of our generation. There can be no doubt that the success of that series in very considerable degree was indebted to the name it bore and the distinguished company its volumes kept.

Palgrave's friendship for Tennyson was another fact of moment in his career, — almost the only one of very particular note, although he was Professor of Poetry at Oxford, wrote verse himself, and published some volumes of prose. He was introduced to Tennyson in 1849 by a brother of Arthur Hallam, and Tennyson, as the story goes, finding him less "superior" in manner than he had found other Oxford men to be, invited him to his lodgings, which were humble ones, in what is known as Camden Town Road. Tennyson there read to him some passages from the manuscript of "In Memoriam." Thenceforth the friendship was lifelong. Death itself divided them by only five years.

Tennyson had something to do with the preparation of "The Golden Treasury." It was while walking with him near Land's End that Palgrave first informed Tennyson of his enterprise, which Tennyson approved at once, and in the preparation of which he afterward gave advice. But this advice, while valuable and frequent, has never been

thought to be of such extent as to deprive Palgrave of any of the substantial credit which the preparation of the collection conferred. His "Golden Treasury" will live as long as no one rises up to produce a better. And this compiler we are not likely to see for many years, if ever we see him.

## IX

### THE MECHANICAL SIDE OF BOOKS

READERS whose knowledge of books goes back thirty years have often remarked the changes that have come over sizes, type, and binding. They are quite as remarkable as the changes which have completely transformed the Christmas book. Formerly the Christmas book was intended purely as a gift. It was a book by itself, useful in its way, but as literature a thing meant only for a season. It sold on its gorgeous binding and its pictures, and these were often so commonplace that the wonder ever since has been how a taste existed which could tolerate, not to say admire, them.

While books have always been conspicuous among holiday gifts, the numbers thus used have enormously increased in late years. For a long period it was the custom of publishers to produce special holiday books which were of little use at any other time of the year—those resplendent quartos and folios for which there was no resting-place at home except on a centre-table or in a store-room. They were attractive to look at, but it was impossible to read them. Men read such books in earlier times,—their Bayle, their Eras-

mus, their Shakespeare, when inclined desks offered solid places to hold books, when men did not understand that better book sizes existed, and when they had ampler leisure.

No enlightened visitor to book-stores can fail to note the comparative absence of large books. The folio and quarto and even the octavo are conspicuous through absence. The display is dominated by duodecimos. The tendency is to make books much smaller than duodecimos, of which the popular "Temple Classics" may be cited as examples. Here we have evidence of return to a fashion as old at any rate as the first edition of Fielding's "Tom Jones." Even the holiday books have become fit for human hands to hold. If there be no royal road to learning, there are many easier roads than those which run over the steep grades and around the sharp curves which folios and quartos place in the way. The Christmas book in its contents must have intrinsic value; cover and pictures must play subordinate parts.

A similar change has come over the subscription book business. Costly folios and quartos no longer succeed. People do not want them. In large cities people commonly live in flats, hotels, and apartments, where it is impossible to house them. And therefore the publishers are adapting their manufactures to changed conditions. They make books that will go into small book-cases. They no longer count on centre-tables as repositories.



In the auction rooms one often sees demonstrated the failure of the high hopes with which many subscription books of a former period were purchased — those costly folios and quartos issued in limited editions, and the value of which purchasers were assured would advance. Rare, indeed, is the case where values have even been maintained, and very common the cases where the fall in value has been tremendous. Recently was heard the pitiful tale of a woman who, some years ago, had purchased a work of this class in ten volumes, paying \$100 for each volume; in all, \$1000 for her ten resplendent folios, — an investment which she believed was as good as money in an interest-paying bank. She now wished to sell her set, and in vain sought to get for it \$60. In other words, she could not sell it for a sum representing one year's interest at six per cent on the original purchase price.

The change which has transformed books for summer reading is of another sort, though none the less admirable. Back in the seventies the summer book was in the main a work of fiction, printed usually in small type, with two columns to the page, and bound in tasteless paper covers, — a book to read and then roll up for mailing to distant friends or throw into the waste-basket. It had a long and, for the publishers, a profitable reign. More than one famous writer's books in piratical times were thus brought to the knowledge of readers. That style of book had its successors in other paper-covered books,

many of them yellow in colour, and not a few of them might have been described as "yellow" in their contents, — unwholesome, unprofitable things, fit only to be read and forgotten.

Newer times have brought better books. The book in paper covers has almost entirely disappeared, and it is an exit not to be regretted. In France its sway still holds, for in France customs change far less readily than here. It is buckram that has emancipated us. It is a great debt we owe to buckram. With its coming into dominance the covers of our least expensive books have taken on permanent qualities and artistic appearances.

Indeed, the art of designing book covers has grown into one of the most familiar arts of the day, though it is one of the latest. It cannot be untrue that thousands of books have been sold in late years because their covers were pleasing. It has been a delight to see them and to hold them. A new charm has come into the life of the literary editor, who now meets the small boy with his daily load of newly arrived books with an expectancy of pleasure that formerly had become rare. The burdensome prospect of a new accumulation of books to be reviewed has been lightened by a sense of the pleasure the covers will give.

A wide welcome has attended these changes. Indeed, there can be little doubt that the enlightened publisher has had his full returns. Smaller books mean cheaper books, but at the same time books not

less attractive to the eye than were the big ones of former times. Far less money has been put into their pictures, but good pictures, all the same, are there, made though they are by cheaper methods. Bindings more inexpensive are seen; but they are radiant in artistic designs and pleasing colours. The cover, a thing once left to the binder's art, is now the product of an accepted artist.

More and more has this change shown regard for what in strict sense is literature. Makers of gifts in choosing books bestow greater thought on the text than on the printing and binding. The old admonition, "Do not judge a book by its binding," is losing its force. We are approaching a time when the binding of a book shall indicate something of its value inside,—when the Kiplings, as a matter of course, shall be well printed and the Hawthornes nobly bound.

With what shabby garments many books now famous in American literature were presented in their early editions, and how in contrast do they stand with the garments Stevenson, Kipling, and Barrie have recently worn. Choice type, paper, and binding have been bestowed upon them. Those works appear in such splendour as awakens sad thoughts of the typographical habiliments in which Irving and Cooper were dressed.

It is not alone in covers that change has come. In the contents of the holiday and summer books great advance has taken place. It is nowhere more re-

markable than in what are known as outdoor books, and especially those which deal exclusively with nature. Botany has been wonderfully popularized. Bird life has been made known to thousands who never hoped to understand it. The lore of fields and forests, the populations of the air, streams, and ponds, the things seen at roadsides, have acquired new value and many meanings for us all.

To inquire into causes would take us far. But as there has been a vast movement of population cityward, until farms are deserted and country land values fall, so has the city population developed a marked fondness for country life during part of the year. Thousands from cities now live for months in the country where were only hundreds twenty years ago. And with the joys of this change has come interest in gardens, in the flowers and trees of the forests, in birds of the air, and in fish of the streams. Something is owing to the bicycle, the golf links, and the wonderful enlightenment they have diffused over the whole land concerning rural neighbourhoods lying near us.

Any list of summer books would of necessity have fiction for its greater part. But this is not so true now as formerly. The increase in books dealing with nature has proportionately been greater. Novels themselves exhibit this growth. The charms of life out of doors are more and more dwelt upon in fiction. Of this we have a striking example in James Lane Allen's "The Choir Invisible," that beautiful

story of steadfastness, character, and pain, wherein the story proper charms us not more completely than do the author's splendid pictures of wild nature in a new land — pictures possible only to the pen of a rare mind and choice spirit. Mr. Allen's book speaks everywhere of profound love for the forest and its denizens.

Society and civilization may take hope from the improved quality of summer books. The more Nature is understood, the better the most of us may become. "To the solid ground of Nature trusts the mind that builds for aye," wrote one of the wisest lovers of things on the earth's surface that ever lived. We are being taught to know Nature better as well as our fellows, and to understand her and them as we have not done before. We see again and again how our own mortal and immortal parts are like those of other men; that the world is kin, and that among whatever classes we view it, elemental human nature is essentially one and the same product everywhere.

Reference has been made to what are called trade books — those printed in large editions and sold in all bookstores. Changes quite as remarkable have been wrought among privately printed books and those issued in limited editions. Under an impulse, first started into vigorous life by Mr. Theodore L. De Vinne and the Grolier Club, and later propelled vigorously by William Morris, scores of private and semi-private presses have come into being from New York to Aiken, South Carolina, from East Aurora to



Chicago. Chief among all agencies in these matters has been Morris's Kelmscott Press.

The death of Morris was widely regretted, for literature's sake and for the sake of good printing. The public who bought his books were quite unprepared, at least in this country, to hear that with him would die the Kelmscott Press. An institution so well founded would seem to have been reasonably secure of life beyond the years of Morris. Men die, but their works may live on.

Founded some six or seven years before Morris died, the Kelmscott Press became the most admired of contemporary printing houses. It absorbed the best taste and labour of its founder, and upon nothing that he ever did was his own personality stamped more deeply. Not only did he give his mind to borders, bindings, paper, and ink; he designed his own type—each letter of it, and each font used. He printed books as he devoutly believed that great and good books ought to be printed. Never to a printer's work went more consecration; and whether or not we admire his type and his sizes as desirable for books in general, the splendour of his products must be conceded. Probably it was Morris's personal share in his work that accounted for the abandonment of the press. As had been feared, the fate of it became "an artistic necessity." No one remained to carry the work on.

The London *Academy* has expressed a belief that his Chaucer alone will render Morris and his press

"memorable for all time." "For all time" — ah, who can say that? This is a world of changing fashions, and in the art of printing, as in most other arts, the taste of one time is not the taste of another. The smallness of the editions will alone make the books scarce; indeed, in a sense they were scarce the day they were published, just as, in another sense, the Grolier books were and are scarce. Whether the future, therefore, will see them collected somewhat as Elzevirs are, or as the books of Aldus are, is another matter on which to prophesy would be vain. In what directions the book taste of the future may not run no man can tell.

## X

### LIBRARIANS AND THEIR INFLUENCE

THE American Library Association has been in existence about a quarter of a century. It was organized in a feeble way and in the midst of some discouraging predictions. But it has done more, probably, for what may be called the intellectual growth of libraries—the intelligent enlargement of their numbers, the widening of their educational influence on proper lines—than all other forces which have been active in their behalf. Except for its work, one well might question if men like Mr. Carnegie ever could have been inspired to make such large investments in posthumous fame. Perhaps the most striking example of its influence, in a case which may be called personal, was the weight it had with President McKinley, in casting aside all other suggestions, and yielding to its recommendation that one of its most distinguished and often honoured members, Mr. Herbert Putnam, be made Librarian of Congress.

Of course there have been other weighty influences operating for the spread of libraries. First among them has been the enormous growth in the percentage of the population which reads books and thus creates an irresistible demand for collections accessi-

ble to the public, even in small towns and villages. Another that has been of greater weight than the public generally understands is the library schools, where have been raised up hundreds of capable young men and young women who have not only been taught to catalogue and classify books, but what books are worth buying and by what methods people may be induced to undertake more systematic and instructive reading.

In a large way the gatherings of the association have been in themselves library schools. They are in no strict sense gatherings whose main purpose is the pursuit of pleasure. Regular and prolonged sessions are held for the discussion of extremely practical questions in library work. No visitor can sit through one of the meetings and fail to be impressed by the zeal and intelligence with which such topics are taken up. Meetings are held annually in different parts of the country. One year the place was Lakewood-on-Chautauqua, the next, Atlanta. Again, a meeting in Montreal was followed by one in Waukesha, Wisconsin. Wherever the place may be there is never lack of continuous interest, nor of those advantages which are derived from an exchange of ideas in private conversation.

The remarkable fact has often been observed that even remote or distant places fail to prevent a large attendance. One such place was a small town unknown to most readers outside the Middle West, and yet the attendance was the largest which the associa-

tion had ever secured, the total reaching over 450. Nothing could better illustrate, on the one hand, the extent to which library interests have spread throughout the West, and, on the other, the enthusiasm with which librarians make long journeys to attend the annual gatherings.

Pilgrimages to distant places are undertaken with difficulties—for one thing, a letting go of exacting duties at home, for another, the expense involved, and for a third, the reluctance which library trustees formerly manifested and still to some extent do manifest, in permitting leaves of absence. But that large attendance proved, as others have proved, how successfully these difficulties have been overcome. Indeed, matters have now reached a point where trustees not only permit absences with cheerfulness, but go themselves to the meetings and become active participants in the discussions.

In the autumn of 1900, at the annual meeting of the librarians of New York State, held at the Lake Placid Club, in the Adirondacks, it was decided to establish as a permanent institution what should be known as Library Week. Heretofore the association, during the ten years of its existence, had met each year in a different place, but the usefulness of that custom having, it is believed, exhausted itself, this permanent meeting-place was chosen.

Under this system it was seen how it would be possible at all times for members to know precisely where their association would come together, the



surroundings amid which the meeting would be held, the cost of transportation, and other things which heretofore may have been indefinite or experimental. At that attractive spot in the Adirondacks, where more than 2000 acres have been secured by the club, with restrictions upon those who may enter the grounds, and where many other regulations conduce to good order and agreeable surroundings, the association has found itself in possession of an ideal meeting-place.

Not alone has the change resulted in a larger attendance from librarians and their assistants, but from other persons interested in libraries, including those most important bodies, boards of trustees. From them the attendance had formerly been limited, but a greater degree of understanding between trustees and librarians has not failed to result in substantial good for both. There has also been secured some attendance from men of letters. Still better things in that line are anticipated. Mr. Stockton, for example, forsaking some remote lodge in the wilderness, may drop in to solve the "Lady or the Tiger" riddle. Mr. Mabie, from some camp-fire at the foot of Whiteface, may run over with a thought or two in that approved grip which he always carries on his shoulders. Dr. van Dyke, leaving behind some little river in the forest, and taking with him "Lady Greygown," may call around to discourse of books as well as sermons that are "straight." Harry Thurston Peck, with classical dictionaries and the

pedagogical stool cast aside, may descend with an essay touching close to life and nature, borrowed for the occasion from Rafford Pyke.

And so of the booksellers and bookbinders. They, too, have come to give and to receive hints of very special value. Binders have been able to learn that a flexible spinal column is as good for books as for men, and that bindings all white and gold, or arrayed in the splendours of the rainbow, when meant for circulating libraries, can be improved upon.

In the establishment of Library Week, the New York association took the most significant step since its organization. A very few years ought to make this event widely known, and recognized all over the State as an annual occurrence toward which drift the new thoughts of a whole year, and from which proceeds much valuable inspiration for the work of the year to come.

An attendance of about 175 persons at the second annual meeting under this plan already speaks impressively of widespread interest in library work. This represents twice the number who were present the first year. Not alone were New York librarians there, but the chiefs of some of the most prominent institutions in distant parts of the country. Occurring as the meeting did, just after schools and colleges had begun the new year's work, when many librarians could not get away, the large attendance was still more impressive.

Plans were carefully laid for widening still farther

the usefulness of libraries. Most important of these, perhaps, was the establishing of "library institutes," through which greater efficiency will be secured in the libraries of towns and villages, where at present primitive methods often prevail. Steps were also taken to secure greater publicity in all towns where libraries exist, as to the work and resources of the various collections, and thus to draw within the influence of the libraries a larger number of people.

In the summer of 1901 there was printed a detailed statement of the vast sums of money which, in the previous year, had been given by individuals in this country to libraries, the total rising to more than fifteen millions of dollars. Many of these givers no doubt had some distinct notion of the zealous and intelligent work which librarians are doing. They ought to have still more. No one familiar with the library associations can fail to see with what wisdom and devotion these large sums of money will be made useful to the public. Mr. Carnegie and other beneficent citizens may be well-informed in these matters, and they ought to find special satisfaction from any knowledge they may have. Librarians do not travel far, nor do they spend a week of time in discussion of the most practical and important problems that rise in their work, except through an interest in their calling, which, in view of their modest pecuniary rewards, it would be proper to describe as consecration.

Of their work in behalf of American literature, as

distinct from English, or foreign, an illustration is found in a list of two hundred books that have been recommended to the schools of Iowa. In Iowa has probably been given greater attention to village and school libraries than in any other of the Western States. The list is interesting not only as an expression of judgment from a distant community, but as a distinct sign of growth in very important educational matters.

The enormous increase of books which a few years have seen places at the disposal of schools so confusing a mixture of good and evil things that great care and ripe experience are necessary in the formation of safe judgments in preparing a selected list. The conclusions of most persons probably will be that Iowa has made a selection that calls for little serious criticism. The preponderance of books by American writers is a striking, as well as gratifying, feature of this list. Not twenty per cent of the books came from English writers, and the English authors who do appear are mainly authors who wrote for all time — Defoe and Bunyan, Thackeray and Dickens, Lamb and Scott, Ruskin and George Eliot — writers whom no list could well dispense with.

Of English writers now living the list contains scarcely a representation. The living ones chosen are Americans — Mrs. Dodge and Burroughs, Scudder and Fiske, Eggleston and Noah Brooks, with such other American names as Craddock, Sanborn, Matthews, Champlin, Wiggin, Burnett, Coolidge,

Jackson, and Alcott. The great departed were represented equally well, — perhaps might have been still better, — Whittier, Holmes, Lowell, Cooper, Mrs. Stowe, and many others.

This strong leaning toward American authors may have its unfavourable side from the point of view of pure literature, though scarcely from any other vital point. A sense of nationality in literature, perhaps more than any other sense, has been needed in American common life. Books by American writers, dealing with American themes, can promote this feeling in young minds far better than other influences can promote it — better even than unfurled flags and marching militiamen. It takes deeper root in the character and becomes a more potent and permanent possession.



## XI

### THE PATHOS OF A MASTER'S FATE

TYPICAL of the fate of the most brilliant of ephemeral writers is the fate that has overwhelmed Nathaniel Parker Willis. It has been the fashion of a generation to speak slightly of him and of his work, and that fashion has been revived whenever his writings have been called to public attention. If the remoteness of Willis from our times has served somewhat to soften the terms in which judgment was formerly passed, the essential verdict remains what it was thirty or forty years ago. If ever a man of letters was a writer for his own day and for no other day, it was Willis. Not only his topics and his personality, but his peculiar mental constitution, seem to have been such as made it impossible he should do anything entitled to survive even for fifty years. If he had any of the qualities of genius, it was capacity for work, which indeed he had in considerable abundance, and yet what he did appears always to have been done with so much ease that one is tempted to qualify the importance even of this quality.

The last years of Willis's life, when he was making a brave struggle with misfortune, redeem his career

from the charge of uniform and persistent worldliness, which at one time threatened to be justified for the whole of it. He fought a good fight at the end. His days at Glenmary also show that there was something better in him than the world had seen during his four and a half years of pleasure and junketing abroad. One thinks kindly of Willis because he was contented at Glenmary, and one can almost share the pangs of real regret with which he gave up that retreat. Again, in that brave struggle at the last, some ground might be found for an elaborate theory that Willis was the victim of precocious success and premature social triumphs. At the same time one might not find it difficult to write an exhaustive essay, with his life for illustration, to show that the hero and the dandy are not incompatible in one and the same individual.

Willis came of good New England stock, and his home training left nothing to be desired on its religious side. Very trying is the story of his backsliding at New Haven and the social career he ran there, with all its vanity and sentimental moonshine. Infinitely more easy is it to sympathize with the collegiate waywardness of Poe, to whom so little wise direction had been vouchsafed in youth. Poe's sins were great enough, but Poe had been a spoiled child; in his very recklessness afterwards one may discover a kind of courage and sincerity. Willis's crass heedlessness and his want of all serious aims quite exhaust the patience. He seems never in those

days to have regarded this world as a reality, or the life before him as serious business. The world to him was rather a place to sing in and dance in. Early literary success, if it did not actually turn his head, came near doing so; had his head been completely lost and disaster come, the results might have been better for Willis in the long run: he might then have seen his error and reformed his plan. Success followed upon success with accelerating speed, until ere he had reached his majority he was fairly intoxicated with social triumphs. New Haven did not set boundaries to them. From New York in 1827 he wrote as follows:—

“I staid in Stratford till Friday, and then the Johnsons offered me a seat in the carriage to New York. This, of course, was irresistible, and Friday night at 10 o'clock I was presented to the Mayor of the city, at a splendid levee. It was his last before leaving his office, and I never saw such magnificence. The fashion and beauty and talent of the city were all there, crowding his immense rooms, to show their respect for his services. I found many old acquaintances there and made some new ones, among the latter a Mrs. Brunson, as beautiful a woman as I ever saw, and her sister, Miss Catherine Bailey, also a most beautiful woman. At 2 or 3 o'clock I went home to Mr. William Johnson's, and in a glorious bed, with a good coal fire by my side, slept off the fatigues of a sixty miles' ride and four hours' dissipation. On Saturday evening I went to a genuine

soirée at the great Dr. Hosack's. This man is the most luxurious man in the city, and his house is a perfect palace. You could not lay your hand on the wall for costly paintings, and the furniture exceeds anything I have seen."

A young man from New England, of homely origin and not yet possessed of his college sheepskin, who was getting on socially at this famous place and who could write about it in that gleeful way, hardly contained promising material for a future man of letters of the class who work in silence to produce books the world cannot let die. Vanity of vanities is written all over these early years. So soon as he had got away from home and from Andover there appears, in fact, for many years to have been scarcely anything else clearly visible in his headlong progress.

It is true his best work was done before his life had reached its meridian; he had a really national reputation before he had left college; but there is everywhere much to qualify his success when we are asked to accept it as a reward of merit. He was inordinately fond of the praise he so easily won. Writing was to him a species of self-indulgence rather than a sacrifice. There was no baptismal fire about these young days. The baptismal fire came in Willis's old age. He bore it, however, and to his lasting honour be this recorded, with the fortitude of a brave and wiser man.

His biographer, Professor Beers, speculates as to what would have been the result had Willis been per-

mitted to end his days at Glenmary — whether or no his talents would have produced something richer and deeper than anything he has left. The question is interesting, and Professor Beers answers it rightly when he says, Willis's talent was "the expression of his temperament — fresh, facile, spontaneous, but impatient of continuance. He was dependent on the world about him for subjects and for impulses. His talent, as with all talent of this sort, did not ripen and grow with age. It was essentially the talent of youth and youthful feelings, and was nothing if not emotional, spontaneous, and superficial.

"When health began to decay and youth was over, and his animal spirits had effervesced, life commenced to have a flat taste. The bloom was off. His writing, too, as we have seen, was always closely related to his personal experiences, and as these grew tamer he had less and less to report, and his writings grew tame in proportion. With some, mere study and contemplation supply to a degree the ravages which time makes upon the freshness of young impressions. But it had been Willis's misfortune in youth that a premature success deprived him of the discipline of early rebuffs, and had made a painful self-culture needless. He never drew much inspiration from books, and in later life read very little."

Willis's life abroad would admit of lengthened discussion and much moralizing. Its immense success might well puzzle any one who was a stranger alike to the Court of Lady Blessington and the personal



attractions of Willis. He shared for a time, says Professor Beers, in the pleasures of the titled aristocracy and the idle rich, "and he took to it like one to the manner born." Clubs, parks, great country houses, fine, haughty women, and the hereditary grace and indolence of generations "seemed no more than the birthright of this New England printer's boy." Wherever he went he made friends. He himself has told how he "dined with a Prince one day, and alone for a shilling in a cook shop the next," and how he was twice "entirely destitute of money in places where he had not one acquaintance." Few of the people whom he met in society suspected what thin ice he was skating on, or dreamed for an instant that this dashing young attaché was dependent for his bread and butter on weekly letters to the newspapers. Three days after his arrival in London, where he was introduced through a letter from Landor, he wrote home as follows:—

"What a star is mine! All the best society of London exclusives is now open to me — me! a sometime apprentice at setting types! me! with but a sou in the world beyond what my pen brings me, and with not only no influence from friends at home, but a world of envy and slander at my back. Thank heaven! there is not a countryman of mine, except Washington Irving, who has even the standing in England which I have got in three days only. I should not boast of it if I had not been wounded and stung to the quick by the calumnies and false-

hoods of every description which come to me from America. . . . I lodge in Cavendish Square, the most fashionable part of the town, paying a guinea a week for my lodgings, and am as well off as if I had been the son of the President, with as much as I could spend in the year."

Professor Beers contends that Willis was not a mere tuft-hunter and social adventurer. Though he loved a lord, he also loved a commoner, and was not insensible to meanness and imbecility in the possessor of a historic name. He found great delight in his London experiences, but they palled upon him at last, until he declared himself "fatigued to death with dinners and dissipations." To his fiancée he wrote that dissipation henceforth, if they indulged in it at all, would be her pleasure and not his. He had lived ten years in gay society, was "sick at heart of it," and wanted "an apology to try something else." Professor Beers says of the "Thoughts on the Balcony of Devonshire House at Sunrise after a Splendid Ball," written at this time, that they are one of his most genuine utterances:—

Morn in the east! How coldly fair  
It breaks upon my fevered eye!  
How chides the calm and dewy air;  
How chides the pure and pearly sky!

It was perhaps natural that a mind in this state should fly from one extreme to the other, that in leaving London and its vanities Willis should go to Glenmary with its mossy glens and running waters.

The "Letters from under a Bridge" were psychologically a fitting sequel to the "Pencillings by the Way." The farm at Glenmary comprised about two hundred acres, and here Willis was content to dwell for five years. His regret at leaving was unquestionably genuine. As has already been said, Glenmary redeems the career of Willis from the stain of whole-hearted worldliness. Even Boston must have thought better of him after he lived there.

Why Boston did not love Willis it is easy to understand, but why it should have abused him so unmercifully is not so apparent. He was constantly in receipt of anonymous letters calling him a puppy, a rake, and harsher names. He was attacked in the newspapers as a frivolous and conceited dandy. From England he wrote to his mother that the mines of Golconda would not tempt him to return and live in Boston. There seems little room to doubt that he was abused outrageously. And yet no man was more ready to oblige another or to say good-natured things, and no man of letters surely was ever more free from literary jealousy. His kindness to Poe, when Poe stood most in need of friends, and the testimony he bore to some of Poe's most admirable personal qualities, should never be forgotten.

Some of the opposition Professor Beers attributes to the fact that Willis was successful, that he was a favourite in society, and that, above all, he wore conspicuously good clothes. There may be something in this explanation, but it covers only a small part of

the ground. The true secret of the stern opposition lay deeper, and Professor Beers states it thus: "There was also something about his airy way of writing and the personality it suggested that was and is peculiarly exasperating to a certain class of serious-minded people, who resent all attempts to entertain them on the part of any one whom they cannot entirely respect." There is real insight in that statement. But more should be said in accounting for Boston. Boston knew how inferior was all of Willis's work to the work that other men in Boston were then doing. Those men were producing literature, while Willis was not, and yet Willis received practically all the honours — at least the apparent ones.

The writings of Willis have fallen into neglect; that was predestined from the nature of them, and in the main this was quite deserved. His prose writings are, I believe, out of print, though his poems still have some sale — about two hundred copies annually. This approaches to something like oblivion. When a volume of selections from his prose writings came out about ten years ago, most readers born since 1850 probably met them for the first time. The volume served some purpose, however, in widening public knowledge of a man who, with all his faults, did some real service to our literature.

Professor Beers affirms that Willis's special gift to literature "was in his instinct for style." There was no style in America when he began to write. Cooper had none whatever, and Irving hardly had one that

could be called American. "The bright thought" of Willis's writings "interjected into the muddy stream that flows interminably through the magazines and annuals of the thirties and forties must certainly have seemed a fountain of refreshment." Granting all this, and no more can possibly be granted, it stands a slight residuum indeed. So much success, such unchecked popularity, so many books that every one read, — surely all these promised to exact a stronger tribute from posterity.

On the score of Willis's necessities, it should be said that he was all his days writing, not for fame or for public honours, but for dear life itself, and this in a time when pure literature was paid not better than hod-carrying. If Willis chose to write what he could sell at good price, than write what he believed would live, — in other words, if he preferred Willis's way to Hawthorne's way, — perhaps it is only the stern moralist who would condemn him. He at any rate had small literary ambition, and scarcely pretended to be more than he was, for which some credit is due to him. He was no rival of the men who have survived him. But surely this was not the fault of Willis: he was incapable of becoming their rival. He had talents, but lacked noble ambition. Therein lies the pathos of his life.



## XII

### THE BURNING QUESTION

WHILE this flood has been rising, the world already was full of books. Hundreds of thousands of them, and perhaps a million or two, have been produced since men began to print,—great books a few of them, which to generations of wise men have been more cherished than lands or houses, bonds or precious stones. Not a few of them have been constantly reprinted only to be crowded into neglect by the latest popular novel, a thousand copies perhaps being sold of each where one hundred thousand or three hundred thousand of a novel found purchasers. Not many of these new books have been in any sense indispensable. Books of that sort come only in a generation, but here and there were books capable of creating wholesome joy and giving intellectual profit. Against their survival above the crowd of ephemeral novels there existed no alarming danger; the danger threatened not the books but those who would not read them—neither them nor the great old books, the classics of our tongue, that were born with messages between their covers fit for the heart of man in all seasons and beneath all roof-trees.

To be known as the author of a book ought to

mean something more than to write sixty thousand words and get them printed. A true book is not alone a mass of printed words bound between covers. All true books have souls, an adjunct which scarcely one in a hundred so-called books could be said to possess. The pity of it all is that in this flood the few books among them all that possess the breath of enduring life must struggle so long in swirling waters or get stranded in marshes where thrive the unworthy and profitless thousands, modest worth waiting so long for any kind of recognition.

A step in the direction of better influences was taken within the past few years at the first public meeting of the National Institute of Art and Letters. From it should have sprung an inspiration. Addresses by Charles Dudley Warner, then threatened with the illness from which he soon afterwards died, and by Dr. Henry van Dyke, sounded notes of warning in tones not to be mistaken. They were indeed trumpet calls. Selected as the members of the Institute had been by the Social Science Association, its membership represented what is best in contemporary thought and purposes.

How to restrain the excessive output of books is indeed a problem which only the wisest should attempt to solve. Such enormous publishing plants have been established, representing great investments, that we are confronted at the outset with what is perhaps the most serious aspect of all this question. Obviously the only way which may, at the same time, keep this

capital employed and promote the interests of literature, lies in the production of new works that are good, and the reprinting of older works whose rank and worth have become fixed. Sad it is to reflect how many [t]housands of readers acquainted with "The Heavenly Twins" are ignorant of "The Waverley Novels"; how many have an intimate acquaintance with "Lyrics of Lowly Life" who never read "The Ode on Intimations of Immortality"; how many are smilingly familiar with "David Harum" who know not Landor's name.

Reform must come, not so much from the publishers as from conditions which may be promoted or created outside of them. Two special agencies for that work already exist. One is the librarian, who with the splendid advances made, not only in the number of libraries, but in the intelligence and thoroughness with which they are managed, has acquired opportunities in this direction such as never before existed. The other is the organs of literary intelligence and criticism, which in the size of their constituencies, and their power for good, have notably increased in very recent years.

It is a striking fact that these opportunities have thus far been attended, not by a restriction of unworthy literature, but by its increase, thus showing what golden opportunities have been allowed to pass. It may be true that efforts, in some instances, have been wisely consecrated to the highest duties, but the depressing fact remains, as Dr. van Dyke has said,

that so many who "should be the leaders of the public have become its courtiers." In other words, librarians and periodicals, instead of becoming guides, have been content to take places as mere followers. Thus they have aided in promoting the circulation of what is merely popular, striking, or perhaps sensational. They have gone with the tide, this swelling flood-tide of books pouring down the channels of time's stream every year to the number of many thousands. They have merely reflected and given new impulses to conditions which an unguided public, left to itself, has created.

But it is noteworthy that on the programme for the meeting of the New York Library Association in the autumn of 1901, a prominent topic for discussion was "Book Selection." Librarians generally regard this as the most perplexing problem which confronts them—what books to select for purchase. It is the very foundation of their work and influence, and from it proceeds the most important results they accomplish in directing public taste. But in these matters they are all dependent, largely, upon opinions which reach them from others, and notably from critical journals, since no librarian can possibly find the time to read any large percentage of the books published every year. When librarians have read the critical opinions, there still exists a large domain in the matter of choice which reviewers do not and cannot cover from the librarians' points of view.

Reviews of books do not always, indeed perhaps

only now and then do they, tell a librarian whether a certain book ought to go into a particular library. Local conditions vary widely; the appropriation available may be large or small; the community to which the library ministers may be a highly intelligent one, or it may be the reverse.

Most librarians understand how great is the need for some potent force which shall restrict the present devotion of readers to books that are ephemeral. Something, perhaps, can be done by critical journals through not giving large publicity to such works; something already has been and is still done by them, and undoubtedly more might be done. But librarians are in a position to do things even greater.

Mr. William E. Foster in establishing what he calls a "standard library" at Providence has undertaken a work of the highest significance in this line. Cordial and unanimous approval has been bestowed upon it by many eminent librarians. He placed before his readers a collection of what he called "books of power," borrowing the phrase from De Quincey, of which books large numbers of readers probably knew nothing more than the names, if so much as these. It comprises the world's best literature, ancient as well as modern, and his purpose was thus to remind readers, who give excessive devotion to ephemeral books, that there is something else in the world entitled to their attention.

Meanwhile Mr. Henry L. Elmendorf of the Buffalo Public Library has set apart a collection brought



together on somewhat broader lines, and embracing not only "books of power," but works of other permanent rank and utility in the life of man. Mr. Elmendorf's collection aims at meeting not only the scholar's needs, but those of the active and intellectual man of the world. Still more recently Mr. John Cotton Dana, librarian of the City Library of Springfield, Massachusetts, on retiring from that city to assume charge of the Newark Public Library, was able to announce that after four years spent there he had reduced the proportion of fiction read by twenty-four per cent.

Of late years there have been many signs, which those who look closely could observe, that a reaction ere long would come against the overwhelming devotion of readers to popular fiction at the expense of more serious reading. The publishers themselves have believed that a reaction was bound to come within a reasonable period. Mr. Dana clearly did not wait for it, but took matters in his own hands, and, by the exercise of some kinds of force or art of which he seems to be a master, brought about this very large reduction. Mr. Dana proceeded on somewhat different lines from Mr. Foster and Mr. Elmendorf, but let us hope they may reach results parallel with his.

The librarians of the country are the main hope of society. They, in a measure, can control their output—not perhaps as autocrats, but through silent and tactful influences. It is useless for critical

journals to denounce this class of literature. The results most commonly are to promote its circulation by calling attention to it. At best they can become influential only by the exercise of silence. They may select from the enormous flood the books which seem best and ignore the others. It is usually beyond their province to take up old books, since critical journals exist in the world for the purpose of dealing with new ones. But the librarian has within his walls the world's store of great and good books. He likes nothing better than to see his readers take them home, and in numberless ways he can induce them to do so. Mr. Dana has employed the available methods with the utmost skill.

These steps in libraries should serve as the beginning of a movement eventually to become general, and whose coming the librarians' annual meetings may accelerate, until they become a still more beneficent force in the communities where they exercise their offices. Not one of them but will acknowledge how wearisome becomes the task of giving out to readers trivial and commonplace literature, which literally is here to-day and gone to-morrow; while books of power and permanence, books that will endure while civilization lasts, stand neglected on their shelves.

There is, after all, some refuge from this deluge — an ark quite as seaworthy and capacious as the one Noah built, would men only get on board. The printing press and the bindery may send forth upon

the patient public their thousands of new books every year ; but it is not necessary that our homes and firesides shall be invaded. We still possess the inalienable privilege of not giving hospitality to other books than those which are worthy of esteem. We may peremptorily decline to be imposed upon by the enemies of our welfare and peace. Meanwhile to the publishers' cellars and garrets, to the auction room and the peddler's cart, unwelcome books may be forced to go.



## PART II

### DEEP WATERS AND MAIN CHANNELS





## I

### BOOKS THAT LIVE ON THROUGH THE YEARS

THE supreme merit of a great book is that its value remains with the lapse of time ; it does not go out of fashion ; it becomes an actual addition to one's possessions and remains lifelong. The pleasure it gives is capable of constant renewal and even increase, for who can say when he has derived his last or his keenest pleasure from a truly great author ?

It is a familiar discovery for men to find as they grow in years that they grow in appreciation of the best books. No man ever opens Shakespeare without finding something new, and the same is true of Milton and Chaucer, of Byron and Wordsworth, of Landor and Thackeray, of Hawthorne and Fielding. Here are stanch and lifelong friends who never weary us, who are always hospitable and in good temper, and who can be trusted to maintain faithfully more than half the friendship.

The last word can never be said in praise of books. Praise began at the very beginning of knowledge. The rude savage praised written records when he could not understand them ; the wise have praised books with all the laudation speech could frame. Perhaps it is Emerson who has composed the most

expressive words: "Consider what you have in the smallest chosen library. A company of the wisest and wittiest men that could be picked out of all civilized countries in a thousand years have set in best order the results of their learning and wisdom. The men themselves were hid and inaccessible, solitary, impatient of interruption, fenced by etiquette; but the thought which they did not uncover to their bosom friends is here written in transparent words to us the strangers of another age."

The future probably could offer little hope that the number of ephemeral books will decline. They are more likely to increase, and the ratio will be a large one. But it is certain that good books will live and bad ones die. It is with books as with all art — the art that is meant for all time. In old Athens once stood thousands of houses, but only one Parthenon was there. And still may our poet sing: —

Earth proudly wears the Parthenon  
As the best gem upon her zone.

In Italy have been erected millions of buildings, but the Roman Pantheon, Saint Mark's at Venice, and Saint Peter's have survived them all. Let us get our five thousand or our ten thousand books every year; it will still remain true that not more than one really great book can be produced in a hundred years. We must remember how long Italy waited before Virgil came, that "wielder of the state-liest measure ever moulded by the lips of man"; how long she waited for Dante; how long England

waited for Shakespeare, and still waits for another Shakespeare; how France waited for Molière, and Spain for Cervantes. Along with these divinely gifted men came throngs of second, third, and fourth rate writers — whole regiments of them — who had their brief reward and then, each with his book in hand, walked silently and forever into the unknown beyond.

These highest creations of the mind survive all earthly changes. Material works, having served their day, pass into hopeless ruin. States rise and fall. The world's maps are again and again reconstructed. The speech of men dies, and a new speech is born again. But great writings survive all kinds of destruction, whether of man or nature. From state to state they are passed on, and from tongue to tongue. Indeed, they alone keep ancient tongues alive. Because Palestine, Greece, and Rome had literatures, their life and thought are known to us and have formed our own. Only in name are those worlds dead. The worlds really dead are those of the Euphrates and Nile valleys, — Assyria, Babylonia, and Egypt, — dead because neither of them found a voice, a voice that could speak their life and thought into the minds of us — men of alien races, of another clime, of a far-distant age.

The Claudian aqueduct, that splendid monument of Roman genius, stretching far across the Campagna from the Alban Mountains to the city of Rome, whither it bore the water supply, still, with its broken

arches, here and there spans that lonely plain, a mere curiosity for tourists, its utility gone, its architect's name forgotten. Meanwhile, schoolboys, in new tongues, literally as Casca said, in the words Shakespeare gave him, "In states unborn and accents yet unknown," memorize the poems of Virgil and the songs of Horace. The ruins of the Alhambra dominate the hills of Spain above Granada; the cries of birds are heard among its dismantled walls. Meanwhile, its mournful tale has become familiar to us because Irving told it. Even the story of Spain, the story of half a score of centuries, of a thousand eventful years, has been unknown to generations of men and women who have kept among the treasures of their homes the tale Cervantes told.

We may be absolutely certain that whatever is good will not die. Wherever exists a book that adds to our wisdom, that consoles our thought, it cannot perish. Critics may assail it with their hundreds of columns. Its own generation may neglect it. Fire may burn up the entire edition, save a handful of copies; and yet that book will live. Nothing is so immortal as mere words, once they have been spoken fitly or divinely. A good book die! We shall sooner see the forests cut away from every hillside, the volume of water in great rivers run dry; walls built of granite or travertine lying prostrate on the ground. Critics may go right or may go wrong. It matters not. There exists in the world that eternal tribunal, greater far than they, its ver-



dicts final and infallible,—the central heart of cultured mankind.

In great books we have what is best in the men who wrote them. Their work, in so far as human work can ever be, was disinterested. It was done with small hope of any adequate pecuniary reward. It was done because of a faith, often sublime, that it was worth doing for the world's sake. It was done in the face of disheartening circumstances,—in poverty, in sickness, and in need of bread; and the greater the book, the greater the discouragements under which it often was produced. Witness Dante's poem, composed with his soul on fire. Witness Milton's, paid for in that curious sum, a mere "tip" as it were. Witness in our own day Hawthorne's tales, written for \$3 each; or Fitzgerald's version of old Omar's deathless song, now read the whole world round, but of which the unsalable first edition of only 500 copies was offered on a bargain counter at two cents per copy.

"Work done with small hope of any adequate pecuniary reward"—such was theirs. But of other rewards, what a store have great writers not reaped?—the purest, most lasting fame that men ever gain. Before the fame of great authors all other fame "pales its ineffectual fires." The renown of great soldiers, princes, and lawgivers—the Alexanders, Hannibals, Cæsars, Cromwells, and Marlboroughs, the golden-crowned Charleses, Henrys, and Louises, the Solons and Justinians,—all these go down into obscurity in

that "fierce light" which beats about the Homers, the Dantes, the Virgils, the Shakespeares, the Miltons.

The men who did battle around the mighty walls of ancient Troy, Hector, and Achilles, fair Helen herself, had perished utterly, had not Homer sung his undying song. The glory in which Solomon arrayed himself was not only inferior to that worn by the lilies of the field, but less than the glory he has gained through the Book of Proverbs and that "Song of Songs which is Solomon's." David, king of Israel, might have become a shadowy name to us all, had not David's name been linked forever with the Book of Psalms. Julius Cæsar remains far less familiar as the founder of the Roman Empire than as the author of that book in which he tells us that "all Gaul is divided into three parts." Those men in power who made miserable the life of Dante, pursuing him even in his grave, so that Byron could write, —

Ungrateful Florence! Dante sleeps afar,  
Like Scipio, buried by the upbraiding sea,

have been utterly forgotten by generations who have known by heart Dante's immortal epic of the life hereafter. The throng of kings and kinglets, of princes, grand dukes, and Counts Palatine, who dominated the German states in Goethe's day, have perished from the thoughts of thousands to whom "Faust" has become a household word. A world that is still held captive by "Jane Eyre" has

forgotten who was prime minister of England when Charlotte Brontë wrote that book, or who were the men that led the armies and the fleets of Europe to the siege of Sebastopol. Indeed, the day may yet come when Lincoln's administration shall remain less familiar in men's minds than those immortal words—not three hundred words all together—which Lincoln spoke on the field of Gettysburg.

Surely it will be worth while to know that, in our day and generation, we gave our time, not to merely popular books, but to those everlastingly good; not to the evanescent, but to the enduring; not to books that perish as perish newspapers, but to those meant for the heart and soul of man in all ages—books that will not die; books that have immortal souls; books that make for righteousness.

## II

### WRITERS AND SOMETHING MORE

THE seventieth birthday of Tolstoi, which occurred a few years ago, marked also the completion of fifty years of Tolstoi's activity as a writer. The event was duly observed in New York, where a dinner, intended to be "an appreciation by his American admirers of the genius of the great Russian novelist and historian," took place. Not since Stevenson died, and a vast concourse of people gathered in a public hall to commemorate his life, had a like tribute been paid in this country to an author. In each case we may be certain that the tribute was evoked quite as much by the author's character as by his literary genius; in fact, had character been wanting, the tributes would not have been paid at all.

This is a consoling discovery to make at any time, — that men and women reserve their best honours for character rather than for achievement. By that reservation they stamp more conspicuously with approval the things that make best for righteousness in the world. Character is indeed chief among all forces developed in human life. In heroes of the author class there always remains something finer than anything they wrote. Conspicuously true of

Sir Walter Scott, it is scarcely less true of Stevenson, and is perhaps still more true of Tolstoi. Tolstoi's writings have carried his name far, and will carry it to still other generations. He has made Russia familiar to thousands for whom that land, save as a brute force in war, remained a land unknown. They had no interest in that vast but voiceless empire until Tolstoi pictured in moving story the burden and sorrows of life there, giving it a voice all men heard.

When men saw that Tolstoi was not alone a writing man, that he carried out in his own life the simple Christian faith he preached, living as live the poor, selling his goods to feed the poor, he rose to a hero's place. As an author his name has literally gone round the world. As a man the impression of his character has been set deep in the world's central heart—a far finer, nobler, rarer thing to make note of.

Something of this saving power has kept alive the history Clarendon wrote. Much more widely read in the past than now, that book will long survive in the thoughts of the elect of this world, the competent few, the readers who have sound literary understanding. Purely as historian Clarendon has not first rank. He saw little beyond the things immediately around him; he lacked breadth of view; his history is partisan, and he was an advocate on a losing side.

Clarendon has been valued for his style. Because of that his books will survive among the studious



and learned to remote times. His style had stateliness and even grandeur. The nobleman was writ large in it. He could not set pen to paper but it bore the impress of character and the splendour of great station. Those portraits he drew of contemporaries must live with our literature. They are as vital and distinct as any that etcher has produced.

From Tolstoi and Clarendon let us turn to an American woman. An anecdote of Louisa M. Alcott's childhood, told by the wife of Nathaniel Hawthorne, is that one morning at breakfast she suddenly broke the silence with a laugh, as she exclaimed, "I love everybody in dis whole world." Her character, as disclosed in the memoir published soon after her death, shows that Miss Alcott through life cheerfully devoted all that she had of mind, strength, and estate to the comfort and happiness of other people. Her father was an idealist, without fortune, possessed of faculties bordering on genius, but for which the world offered no market. Upon his daughter devolved the main share in the family support. When she could not contribute to it by teaching she tried sewing, or became a governess, or went out to service.

Finding she had a talent for writing stories, she employed that to the best of her powers, and for the same ends. She often thought out stories while busy with sewing. Whatever her hands found to do she did cheerfully. If a sad, this is also an inspiring story: few more notable have come to public know-

ledge in the lives of women in our day. Its splendour and nobility should long survive, and many thousands who read her books have been grateful for knowing how cheerful, brave, and beautiful her own life was. She might have married advantageously. She had more than one offer and many attentions she did not care for; but her heart was bound up in her family. She could not contemplate her own interests as something separate from theirs. She died Louisa Alcott, and honoured be her name.

Before Miss Alcott's time there lived another New England woman whose name must be recalled here. In the summer of 1901, on the south shore of Long Island, near where she had been lost in the wreck of a steamer fifty years before, a memorial was set up to Margaret Fuller. In her own day she had been a dominant personality in our literature, but her collected writings give no adequate impression now of the wide esteem among men of discernment which her endowments secured.

Probably the fact that she was a pioneer among women who earned livelihoods by writing had much to do with Margaret Fuller's ascendancy. What she accomplished was in that day a great thing for a woman to do. Probably there have lived since her time at least a score of women equally accomplished as writers. Literature is now a vocation widely followed by women; they have achieved marked success in it, some of them in lines parallel with her own, others in creative fields to which she did not

aspire, and in which success for her might have been impossible. If it be not so much what she actually wrote as the advance step she took in intellectual work done by women, if she has not survived as a living personality, she is at least a historic figure, and the world has discovered that there was something finer in Margaret Fuller than in her books.

Jane Austen's life was among the least eventful in literary history, — her home a rural one, her father a village rector, her sole knowledge of general and select society derived from journeys to towns like Winchester and Bath and occasional ones to London. Out of this experience she learned what she knew of the world beyond her father's door. It must long remain interesting to study how she acquired that knowledge of life and character which her books so amply disclose. Produced as they were in provincial surroundings, there is nothing provincial about them. Her grasp and self-command, her certainty of touch, are such as only the real masters of literary art have shown. The reader feels as if she had known life at its fullest expression, had travelled far, and dwelt in a richly equipped society.

But we are apt to forget that men and women are much the same in small communities as in large ones; that the springs of action and the directions conduct takes may be observed in a rural parlour no less than in a palatial city drawing-room, in a country house in Hants as well as in a mansion in London. It is the observer, not the place of observation, that counts.

"Hundreds of people can talk, to one that can think," says Ruskin, "and thousands can think, for one that can see." Jane Austen was the one among thousands. Here again must Ruskin be quoted: "The greatest thing a human soul ever does in this world is to see something and tell what it saw." This parson's daughter, in a far-off Hants village, wrote books which made Scott despair, because to him was vouchsafed only "the big bow-wow strain," and which generations have placed among the highest literary creations from female hands.

In her own field she has never been equalled. She stands alone and alone will stand. To present female characters in their finest aspects has ever been the despair of men, and, if not as often the despair of women, again and again have women failed in attempts to present it. If Jane Austen's Elizabeth Bennet be not the finest creation of this sort in all fiction, where shall we find its equal? It is more than twenty years since I read "Pride and Prejudice," but the recollection of that high-souled, sound-hearted gentlewoman has survived the wreck of much baser matter and the crash of many other worlds.

That Miss Austen knew full well the exact range of her powers must become manifest to all readers who reflect. She never went out of her proper path, never beyond her depth. Even the suggestion of the librarian of the Prince Regent, that "a historical romance, illustrative of the august House of Cobourg,

would just now be very interesting," could not mislead her. "I could no more write a romance than an epic poem," she boldly made reply. "I could not sit seriously down to write a serious romance under any other motive than to save my life; and if it were indispensable for me to keep it up and never relax into laughing at myself or at other people, I am sure I should be hanged before I had finished the first chapter." There are thousands who have shared the regret recorded in his journal by Sir Walter Scott, "What a pity such a gifted creature died so early!"

For more than a generation Mrs. Oliphant produced novel after novel, and essay after essay, not to mention many books of a more ambitious and serious nature. Her readers have been limited to no one nationality, no hemisphere, no zone. That her books have given delight to many thousands need not be said. None of them great books—among them all (and they number perhaps a hundred) not one that will penetrate far into the new century—there is scarcely one that has not been read with pleasure, not to say with profit. She produced them so rapidly that the public long since marvelled until marvelling from exhaustion ceased.

With the appearance of the memoir of Mrs. Oliphant soon after her death many things were made clear. In a single sentence she disclosed the whole story. "I have written," said she, "because it gave me pleasure, because it came natural to me, because it was like talking or breathing, because of the big



fact that it was necessary for me to work for my children." Pleasure in work, facility in doing the work, and stern necessity for an income on which to rear children, — these facts explain the literary output of a woman who, judged by the volume of her work and the circumstances in which it was produced, must be accounted one of the striking figures in the literary history of her time. Indeed, it would be quite natural to pronounce her a woman of the heroic type, were it not that all things were so easy to her. Her life indeed seems seldom to have been wanting in sunshine. Sorrows of the deepest, cares of the sternest, something almost tragic, did indeed darken her door many times, but she was never in despair. In old age she could say of these things: —

"I have had trials which — I say it with full knowledge of all the ways of mental suffering — have been harder than sorrow. I have lived a laborious life, with incessant work, incessant anxiety — and yet so strange, so capricious, is this human being that I would not say I have had an unhappy life. I wonder whether this is want of feeling or mere temperament and elasticity, or if it is a special compensation. 'Weren't my heart licht, I wad dee.'

"Economizing, I fear, very little, never knowing quite at the beginning of the year how the ends would come together at Christmas, always with troublesome debts and forestalling of money earned, so that I had generally eaten up the price of a book before it was printed, but always — thank God for it! — so far suc-

cessful that, though always owing something, I never owed anybody to any unreasonable amount, or for any unreasonable extent of time, but managed to pay everything, and do everything, to stint nothing, to give them all that was happy and pleasant and of good report, through all those dear and blessed boyish years. I confess that it was not done in the noblest way, with those strong efforts of self-control and economy which some people can exercise. I could not do that, or at least did not; but I could work."

Mrs. Oliphant seems to have had no illusions as to the artistic merits and literary value of her work. She always knew she was not doing exactly her best, and that what she wrote could last only for a little time: —

"I pay the penalty in that I shall not leave anything behind me that will live. What does it matter? Nothing at all now — never anything to speak of. At my most ambitious of times I would rather my children had remembered me as their mother than in any other way, and my friends as their friend. I never cared for anything else. And now that there are no children to whom to leave any memory, and the friends drop day by day, what is the reputation of a circulating library to me? Nothing, and less than nothing — a thing the thought of which now makes me angry, that any one should for a moment imagine I cared for that, or that it made up for any loss."

In this passage she has disclosed a key to the secret — if secret there be — as to her failure ever to rise to

the higher level of Charlotte Brontë or George Eliot. Mrs. Oliphant was wanting in literary ambition as a dominant passion. Her true ambition was reserved for home and children. Authorship was nothing more than a means to an end, and that end not personal to herself, but the well-being and happiness of others. When her children were dead, and she confessed her complete indifference to reputation, we see how the children had been all in all to her, and mere authorship nothing. One passage, indeed, perhaps shows that larger fame and longer literary life might not have been unwelcome. It is one in which she refers to George Eliot and George Sand; but even the fame of these scarcely aroused a feeling that could be taken as jealousy:—

“These two bigger women did things which I have never felt the least temptation to do, but how very much more enjoyment they seem to have got out of their life, how much more praise and homage and honour. I would not buy their fame with the disadvantages, but I do feel very small, very obscure, beside them, rather a failure all around, never securing any strong affection, and throughout my life, though I have had all the usual experiences of women, never impressing anybody—what a droll little complaint—why should I? I acknowledge frankly that there is nothing in me—a fat, little, commonplace woman, rather tongue-tied—to impress any one; and yet there is a sort of whimsical injury in it that makes me sorry for myself.”

One sentence in that paragraph — "I would not buy their fame with the disadvantages" — has a sound of honest pride and pleasure which goes still further to emphasize the mother-side and the woman-side of Mrs. Oliphant as things paramount. By means of authorship she was able to rear and educate her children and her brother's children to her life purposes. Authorship had little or no other value. All of which means that there was something finer in Mrs. Oliphant's life than in anything she has written.

Now and then it has been said, as a thing for pity, that with a smaller strain upon her income, with greater ease of life, and freedom from care, Mrs. Oliphant might have produced a masterpiece. We may seriously doubt this. In those circumstances she could scarcely have done better. Incentive would have been wanting. More than one masterpiece has been produced in circumstances quite as humble, financially, as her own. The inmost depths of this woman's life are disclosed in her simple and pathetic statement that "to bring up the boys for the service of God was better than to write a fine novel."

### III

#### BIOGRAPHIES THAT ARE HISTORIES

HISTORIANS, as has been commonly remarked, can seldom accomplish great purposes, once they are dependent on authorship for a livelihood. Writing history is a task of years, at least such history as proceeds out of original research. A novelist may live by his pen and often in considerable comfort, once he has made a name; but historians seldom acquire from their books any large returns. Most eminent historians have been men of fortune — Gibbon, Freeman, Parkman, Macaulay, Prescott, Bancroft. They could literally observe the Horatian warning not to publish until "the ninth ripening moon."

The business of writing books has not always been an outcome of high personal character. There have been great poets, successful novelists, and accomplished essayists whose characters bore no important relation to their literary performances; their characters often seemed, in fact, to belie their performances, making an understanding of their work difficult. But the men who have written memorable histories have almost invariably been men of distinct personal worth. We may recall the great list from Thucydides to Tacitus, from Clarendon to Hume,



from Gibbon to Macaulay, from Motley to Prescott, from Parkman to Bancroft. Not a few historians have seemed greater than their works, the work only a partial manifestation of the man. All through their writings the man has been writ large. One sees laborious research, restraint in utterance, the repose of conscious strength; now the action of power, now its silence.

The nature of the historian's occupation is primarily laborious above all other literary effort. His work must be long-continued, must often be a life-work, and it is certain to receive no adequate pecuniary reward. The novelist, now and then, has reached modest independence, but there never lived a historian, save Macaulay, who could be said to have made much money by writing books. Historians have spent the best part of their lives in getting ready to write.

But if their personal demands are greater than those which writing fiction or verse or essays makes, the rewards, in fame at least, are as great, and commonly are greater. This fame is of the best—the purest, most honestly and most disinterestedly won, the most free from any taint affecting its intrinsic worth. The fame of Thucydides rivals, if it does not overshadow, that of the warriors whose deeds he celebrated. Tacitus might well be indifferent to the empurpled despots who happened to rule the world while he was becoming an acknowledged master of the superb tongue of a noble race and a means for

its preservation. Gibbon toiled while lesser men shone, that he might become the greatest of Englishmen who have written history. Parkman, the accomplished narrator of events big with missionary as well as martial valor, earned his fame by the use of a style as matchless for picturesque and varied beauty as were those forests lands amid which his heroes toiled and won or toiled and perished.

Among our latest historians is Captain Mahan. Of his volumes on "The Influence of Sea Power in History" I wish not here to speak, but of his later work on Nelson's life, wherein biography rises to the plane of history. Readers familiar with the earlier books must have approached the "Nelson" with a full sense of the spirit and mastery with which they had been written. Captain Mahan writes out of a full mind: he knows more than he records in detail. He has grasp of material, appreciation of essentials, knowledge of words, an understanding of the effects which words produce, regard for unity of structure, sense of proportion, an eye to the general outline of his completed fabric; in a word, he is what all successful and serious historians have been and ever must be—an architect. When he sets about the erection of an edifice, his first and greatest care is to lay the foundations broad, deep, and firm, after complete knowledge of the superstructure to follow. He begins to build with regard for the nature of the structure to be observed of the public, for its fidelity to facts, its endurance, and its usefulness.

The result has been a life of Nelson before which other lives give place. The private life is unfolded in what must be accepted as the final version, and the naval career presented with equal success as a finality.

The Nelson literature already existing was like the Nelson monuments, numerous but of widely varied degrees of excellence, the most of them having slight value. Before Nelson died a life of him had appeared, and when he lay dead many hands set about writing others — those ill-conceived, ill-written lives, the burden of which the fame of every great man seems destined to endure. At least one of them was inspired by Lady Hamilton ; it had for its moving purpose, not the glory of Nelson, but the claims of the Lady herself upon the Treasury of England. The work by Clarke and McArthur has generally been classed as the best of them ; but it was weighted with a large quarto form and became a burden rather than a pleasure in a reader's hands. It was unquestionably due to this fact that Southey's little work, long since regarded as a classic, met with a degree of acceptance that surprised its author, who was pinning his faith in permanent fame on a "History of Brazil" long since forgotten.

Southey's work was drawn from Clarke and McArthur and was without merit as an original contribution, but it had supreme value in being brief, and as the work of an artist in writing English. It was so far wanting in originality that it embalmed

erroneous statements for which Lady Hamilton and others are responsible. Unlike Weems's "Life of Washington," it had high literary value, and thus has secured for errors longer life than has been enjoyed by those of Weems. It was a hard task to demolish Weems; but the task has virtually been accomplished. With Southey's book, however, the only recourse lies in carefully annotated and corrected editions, for Southey's book will probably live a longer time than anything else Southey ever wrote.

The destruction of popular errors is about the most difficult work that can be undertaken in literature. The fiction of the paternal cherry tree which Weems created has been perhaps the most persistent error in the historical equipment of unlearned Americans. Weems was an itinerant preacher and peddler; not essentially a man of false speech; indeed a man of many good purposes. The lies he told about Washington are to be ascribed rather to want of historical sense than to any desire to indulge in misrepresentation. For the creation of the Nelson fictions we must seek other motives, and less excusable ones; but their destruction has not been the more easy on that account. Aided by Lady Hamilton on the one hand and by Southey on the other, their persistent survival has imposed an almost insurmountable task upon those who would make Nelson known as he was.

It is remarkable how a man trained to a naval life and no longer young has risen to such heights as

Captain Mahan. We can see where leisure has been his for study, where his profession has made him competent to understand naval history; but beyond all this remains something not clear. We can never define the means by which great books were written; the personal equation, the thing we call talent or genius, is beyond our description. We can appreciate character and can value it properly, but we cannot readily understand its workings or its manifestations.

The most interesting thing about Captain Mahan's books is something which the books do not tell us — the answer to the question: how he, a naval officer, turned to literature and acquitted himself in that field of conquest with so much honour. One fact we must assume: he has read great authors and learned to know whereof good historical writing consists. If he has not spent his days and nights with Addison, he has spent them with other masters. He has made no man's style his own, but has conformed to certain fundamental qualities of which all good writing consists — clearness, personality, variety, charm. Style unquestionably is the man, but a man may not have style in prose without education and experience; he may not have it without knowing what it is, and he cannot master it until he has long practised it. The question remains unanswered, except in so far as a partial answer is found in character.

Captain Mahan's naval career has raised him to honourable and even enviable rank; but the times of



peace in which mainly he has served gave him no opportunity for acquiring those distinct honours of war which a brave man may rightly covet. Now that his name is securely linked with that of a hero who, if not flawless, is clearly the most attractive, as he was the most disinterested, in naval annals, he may well cultivate indifference to the fame which war with England made possible for Bainbridge and Perry and war among ourselves for Farragut. No fame can ever be comparable to genuine literary fame. Sailors and soldiers, statesmen and administrators, alike yield before it. It belongs neither to one nation nor to one epoch; nor to one speech nor one race of men. The limits imposed upon it are such only as mark the dwelling-places of the human race in a civilized state.

The reproach often made against American writers of biography, that they do not understand or, understanding, do not use the art of condensation, perhaps never had better justification than the life of Garrison by his sons affords. At the start were published the first and second volumes, embracing thirty-five years of Garrison's life—really about fifteen years that could be said to bear some relation to public affairs. Those two volumes comprised about 1000 octavo pages, and in great part were printed in small type. They inspired a rather depressing view of the outlook, for we seemed quite certain to see two additional volumes ere the end should be reached, while there were natural grounds for fears that we

might see three. Perhaps it was an occasion for thanks that the authors kept the story down to two additional volumes instead of making three.

These two, however, make another thousand pages to add to the previous thousand. Now, 2000 pages are not read in a single sitting: they are not read thoroughly and with pleasure at a dozen sittings, especially when they relate to a single human career devoted to a cause that led to many other great careers. These 2000 pages are equivalent to two-thirds as many words as were found necessary by Edward Gibbon to record the story of "The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire." Gibbon's work was really the history of the civilized world for more than twelve centuries, and it has survived to this day as not only the splendid bridge from the New World back to the Old, as some one (Byron, was it not?) called it, but as an adequate bridge, still competent to do its work and still in no danger and in no need of being superseded.

Again, to take a more modern book, and one which may be said to have been written after approved methods of our time, let Green's "History of the English People" be cited—the larger work, published in this country, in four volumes. Green began his narrative with the year 449, and he brought the history down to the battle of Waterloo, a period of more than thirteen centuries; and yet Green's work actually contains fewer words than this biography of Garrison. With all respect for the filial devotion

which has inspired the biography and for the literary skill applied to its preparation, one must have a frank say again and pronounce the length to which it has been carried unreasonable and unnecessary.

Edward L. Pierce's laborious researches in writing his life of Sumner carried him into every possible field, whether it were political, social, or personal. His extensive footnotes, with references to dates, pages, and names, bear strong witness to extraordinary accuracy and patience. It would not be just to say of the work, as Lowell said of Masson's "Life of Milton," that it is the history of a century, "interrupted now and then by an unexpected apparition of Milton, who, like Paul Pry, just pops in and hopes he does not intrude," for Mr. Pierce confines himself strictly to public questions in which Sumner bore a part.

In these four volumes of 2400 pages, with four to six hundred words each, there are, in a rough estimate, about 1,200,000 words. This falls a little below the 1,500,000 words which Nicolay and Hay devoted to the life of Lincoln; but it nearly equals the words which Bancroft bestowed upon the history of the United States, which, roughly speaking, number 1,350,000. Mr. Pierce's work in no proper sense can be regarded as biography. More truly it should be called a repository of letters, descriptions, and details concerning political movements in which Sumner was a foremost figure. What one

must admire, therefore, is the laborious devotion by which its preparation was made possible. Twenty years were consecrated to it, and no man ever had paid to his memory a nobler tribute of friendship.

The Brooks assault, for example, is narrated in sixty-four pages, which means about 27,000 words, or almost as many as Southey used in writing his life of Nelson. Sumner's diary, kept during a visit to France, comprises about 15,000 words. With all its magnificence as a simple performance, not to say a deed of friendship, these volumes are not biography.

A still more notable example of biographies that are really histories is found in the "Life of Lincoln," by Messrs. Nicolay and Hay. Literature would probably be searched in vain for an enterprise in biography that could rival it in many of its phases. The volumes contain about 475 pages each, and the number of words in each, estimating roughly, is about 150,000. For totals, therefore, we should have 4750 printed pages and 1,500,000 written words, — a truly impressive contribution to the life-story of a single human being.

It is interesting to print alongside such figures the corresponding ones for works in general history. Bancroft's work, independent of the section devoted to the Constitution, covering as it does the period from the discovery of America down to the close of the Revolution, corresponds very closely in length with this life of Lincoln, and it embraces an epoch of very nearly 300 years. The work of John

Richard Green (the larger history is here referred to) contains an approximate total of 780,000 words. It embraces the whole period of England's known history, stretching from the year 449, when the Angles sailed away on that momentous voyage, down to the year 1815, in which England's flag was the flag of victory at Waterloo. The history that Gibbon wrote contains about 1,215,000 words. It is the history of the Roman Empire and of the rest of the known world ("the fairest part of the earth and the most civilized portion of mankind," were Gibbon's words), from the Antonine emperors down to the overthrow of the last Emperor of the East in 1453 — a period of more than twelve centuries. Hence we see that this life of Lincoln equals in length Bancroft's work, and exceeds Gibbon's by 300,000 words and Green's by more than 700,000.

From the date of Lincoln's nomination down to the time of his death was a period of four years and nine months. We have eight and one-half volumes, with 1,275,000 words, devoted to those four years and nine months of one man's life — vastly more than any writer has accorded to any four and three-quarters years of Washington or Cromwell, of Wellington or Napoleon — far more than Green has given to the English people for over thirteen hundred years and slightly more than Gibbon required.

In any strict sense that work is not biography but history, or more properly material out of which history may be written. For a true life of Lincoln, at least



as a man, we must go to Herndon's book, begun more than thirty years ago. At first it was Mr. Herndon's intention to do no more than write a series of magazine articles, but he soon found that the matter easily expanded itself into many hundred pages. Finally the work saw the light in an unheralded and rather obscure fashion. It was published in Chicago, by a house not then extensively known, and in form and with title-page such as did not tend to promote public acquaintance.

Readers of discernment saw its worth, and those who could best judge recognized what a flood of light it shed on Lincoln's life. To many it caused something of a shock. The freedom with which the skeletons in the Lincoln closet were publicly exposed was so unwelcome, and it disclosed so much that explained the profound melancholy of Lincoln, that the question easily arose whether or no Mr. Herndon had really played the part of wise and faithful friend.

Mr. Herndon's theory of the biographer's functions was to tell the whole truth and not a part of it. He was convinced of the durable principle that, in all biography, "at last the truth will come, and no man need hope to evade it." In Lincoln's case the full stock of facts was essential to a true knowledge of him. To understand him we must know him, and to appreciate the great part he played we must "take him as he was." Lincoln was unlike other self-made great men in our history; he "rose from a lower

depth than any of them," and his origin "was in that unknown and sunless bog in which history never made a footprint." Mr. Herndon wrote solely with the purpose of keeping Lincoln in sight, all the time resolved to cling closely to his side. He had no theory of his life to maintain or overturn. Lincoln was his warm and devoted friend. "I always loved him, and I revere his name to this day," says he; and he is sure that God's naked truth can never injure Lincoln's fame, for "it will stand that or any other test."

In an earlier time some memorable biographies that are histories were written on a much smaller scale. Not one man's life was chosen to represent an epoch, but the lives of many men. The lives of those painters which Vasari wrote,—what a storehouse of information and personal gossip does not the simple mention of them recall, and what days and nights of the most delightful reading in all the range of biographical writings, ancient or modern? The extraordinary work done by the men of Florence in the great art period abounds in so many examples of prodigious individual creations that we perhaps ought not to be surprised at the fulness, the charm, and the supreme value of Vasari, to whom indeed the world will forever owe an unpaid debt. The great wonder should be that Vasari remained untranslated into our tongue down to 1850, when Mrs. Jonathan Foster undertook that task, and performed it so well that the newer editions have followed her text.

The fame that has come to Vasari, could he contemplate it now, would astonish him. His dearest ambition lay, not in success as a biographer, — a work he took up only “for love of these, our artists,” — but as a painter and an architect, in which vocations he had much contemporary fame. The period he lived in was subsequent to the periods he wrote about. Throughout Italy, save in Venice, painting had then entered upon its decline. Michaelangelo, alone, of the great Florentines, remained. In Venice, Titian and Sansovino, though old, were still active. Paul Veronese and Tintoretto, however, were young. At Bologna flourished in its splendour the degenerate school that bears that town’s name. Everywhere, save in Venice, was degeneracy. Great art had been late to rise in Venice. Even there it was tainted with the beauty worship which elsewhere attended its decline.

Vasari as an artist was wanting in originality. He lay under the dominion of greater men who had gone before him. He probably did not know this, and while absorbed in extraordinary industry and contemporary success, he doubtless fancied that his name, as well as Raphael’s and Del Sarto’s, would live. Partly because of this satisfaction, partly because of a sincere worship of the work done by greater men, Vasari was admirably fitted to collect and write down the biographical records he has left us. Certainly in his nature were compounded many qualities which go to form the ideal

annalist, — enthusiasm for his work, painstaking care in gathering material, an abounding love of greatness, in which there was never a trace of jealousy, and real genius for putting life and colour into what he wrote.

His latest editors<sup>1</sup> have rightly described him as a man with filial reverence and even tenderness for great masters, and they unqualifiedly accord him the honour that is his rightful possession as a writer in whom the Florence of his time has been made to live forever. These personal qualities applied to art rendered his work barren, but applied to writing, made it immensely valuable. He could gather information diligently, and he had enough art feeling to write artistically. It was a strange fate which made Vasari not only the biographer of the Florentine artists, but the architect of the building in which are housed so many hundreds of their greatest works — the Uffizi Palace and that long passageway which connects the Uffizi with that other noble shelter of art across the Arno. It was fit that Vasari should thus be linked closely with the great period he profoundly loved.

Vasari's chronicles are much more than simple chronicles. They preserve for us in a hundred anecdotes and a hundred folk-sayings the very life and spirit of Florence. It was here that his artistic sense served both himself and posterity. Vasari

<sup>1</sup> E. H. and E. W. Blashfield and A. A. Hopkins, who have edited and annotated sixty of the lives "in the light of recent discoveries."

wrote with his eye solely on Tuscany, Florence, Rome, and Venice. He had no conception that men in vast countries to the north of Italy, and greater ones across the Atlantic which Columbus had found seventy-five years before he wrote, would ever read his book, laud his name, and neglect his pictures.

Quarrels and captiousness were not in him. He had prodigious vitality, but it found expression in work, not in quarrels or in vice. His was a blameless life. Vasari loved the very paving-stones of Florence. We can see in his pages the streets where events occurred, their squares and corners, as well as the splendours of Lorenzo's court and Cosimo's, the religious pageantry, and all the varied aspects of that strong and tumultuous life upon which the battlements of the Palazzo Vecchio, the walls of Arnolfo, the dome of Brunelleschi, and the tower of Giotto looked calmly down.

Great among states was that little Florentine Republic. With a population of perhaps 90,000 souls, she gave to mankind a longer and a greater list of fair names than any other of the smaller cities the world has known save Athens. In her best time she might fitly be likened for art to the older city in the time of Pericles, and for patriotism, to the Rome of the Scipios. But Florence was also great in ways that are material. Her trade was large and profitable. In her manufactures she was prominent among European



cities. Her revenues at one time were greater than those of England under Elizabeth. Crushed as her republican spirit often was, until, under the forms of a republic, there existed tyranny, Florence was a city in which greatness had been achieved, not so much by a state as by individuals. Indeed, intense individuality lay at the beginning of all Florentine achievements. But it was combined with a common love of the state that was unsurpassed among Italian cities, save perhaps in Venice. Hence the worth of Vasari among biographers who have become historians.

## IV

### FASHIONS IN COLLECTING

FASHIONS change in books as in most other things that are products of men's hands. It is only in primitive nature that they do not change — the blue sky, the primeval forest, the winding river, the ocean shore. These remain, and with them forever their charm. It is when men utilize the products of nature that fashion enters. In one age it is the tulip that fashion exalts; in another, the orchid; in another, some particular rose.

And so with books. The fancies of one age are not those of another. Dibdin's heroes and the mighty men revered of Burton pursued prizes which the collectors of to-day neglect. More and more have first editions of English authors advanced in esteem, while specimens of printing and the classics of antiquity have declined. This is probably more true in this country than in England; and here the change first set in; but it is now making its sure way in the older land also.

Some fifteenth-century books sold in London a few years ago show startling declines. Many of them had been purchased at prices which led appraisers to fix upon the whole collection a valuation of

\$150,000. But they were disposed of at something under \$30,000. For fifteenth-century books there no longer exists the demand that once existed. Specimens of early printing and first editions of Greek and Latin classics do not tempt the collector to the same extent that other books tempt him. In first editions he cares more for English authors than for Roman, more for American than for Greek. This explains why a New Testament manuscript of the fourteenth century, that had been valued at \$225, was knocked down for \$50. It also explains why a copy of the Kilmarnock Burns in the original blue paper wrapper has brought more than \$2800.

American collectors probably first learned at the Brinley sale how steadily this change in fashion had set in with their countrymen. Meanwhile, bibliomania in England continued to be chiefly concerned with early and scarce English and Continental books, and with specimens of printing, first editions of the Latin and Greek authors being a marked feature of it; and so the contrast continued for long years after the Brinley sale. Certain works which aroused keen interest there failed to bring high prices here. Striking instances of this were seen. Volumes of surpassing rarity, widely known and esteemed among bibliographers, went for mere songs. Elzevirs, Baskervilles, and Alduses of undoubted genuineness sold at prices absurdly low. Early commentaries that are landmarks in classical scholarship brought little more than it costs to bind a single volume worthily and well.

Twenty years ago there was sold in New York a collection of the European type. A large sum had been laid out in bringing it together. Two years were devoted to making the catalogue—a catalogue the equal of which probably was never made before in America, not only in respect to typographical brilliancy but in bibliographical skill and knowledge of books on the part of the compiler. When the sale began few ready purchasers were found, and the prices were surprisingly low.

In this country it is early, choice, or curious editions of standard modern authors that fetch large sums. American collectors in these fields outdo the foreigner. Many a precious English volume—a Kilmarnock Burns, an early Tennyson, or a scarce and extra-illustrated Byron—has found its way to New York in defiance of sharp English competition. London newspapers have made frequent note and offered pointed warnings against the growing American demand.

It is not so very many years since it was true that several of the highest prices paid in the country were secured for what are called extra-illustrated books, in which hundreds of plates, many of them rare and costly, had been inserted. But this sort of book embellishment has gone into deserved decline. It is a fashion true book lovers are glad to see go out. In order to make these books it was necessary to mutilate, or destroy altogether, many other books. It was a barbarous custom, unworthy of any

one who truly loved books. For a copy of Irving's "Washington," extended in this manner to ten volumes, with 1100 plates, the sum of \$2000 was paid in 1886. The same work would now sell for less. Francis's "Old New York" once sold for even more; but this book had 2500 plates inserted. In the auction room to-day it would awaken moderate interest.

Collectors who brought these books together were in truth vandals; or rather they were like the early popes and princes of Italy, by whom, and not by the Vandals, were destroyed the architectural monuments of Rome. Later in origin than the Grangerites has grown up another class of collectors, whose day, let us hope, may soon be over, — the collector who abstracts owners' plates from books. It is possible to understand stamp collecting and to see the utility of it — especially for the young, who need knowledge of states and geography; or the Grangerite, for he produces unique and curious copies of books; or the Bowdlerizer, for he aims to do public morality some service. But what benefit to his own mind or to the minds of others can the book-plate collector hope to accomplish through the pastime of extracting plates from books and mounting them elsewhere? True, he might do a few worse things, but he might also engage in very many that would be better. We have long feared the ravages he would ultimately inflict. Here is a record from "Literature" of his work in London that confirms the worst fears: —

"The most deadly modern enemy of the London



stall is undoubtedly the growing cult of book-plate collecting. Thousands of octavos and duodecimos — the little eighteenth-century classics, bound in calf — series like the *Tattler* and *Spectator*, and books like Thomson's 'Seasons,' with Westall's plates, which used formerly to drift to the barrow, are now destroyed for the book-plates they contain. There is a dealer's shop within sound of St. Paul's, where any day one may see numbers of these innocents massacred merely for their armorial plates, and it is questionable whether even Grangerizing led to the ruin of a larger number of books than the now flourishing hobby of the book-plate collector."

Moral suasion alone can be invoked to arrest the growth of this practice. Editors may denounce the culprits, preachers may appeal to their better nature, the conscience of the book world may be invoked to stay their hands. The time has indeed come when the cause should enlist supporters. What, after all, can be the charm of this vice? Why should any human being possessing a book that once was Washington's, or Paul Revere's, or Byron's, deliberately separate the plate from the book, thus lessening the interest, and, I should think, the value, of both? Compared with this pursuit, collecting door-plates would seem to be honourable, and collecting coffin-plates understandable.

Observing persons who have noted changes in book-collecting fashions long since were impressed by the growing popularity of first editions of authors

who wrote in the English tongue. The books which Heber and Huth gathered together, — by Heber several houses full, — and whose praises Dibdin sounded in many stately tomes, awaken less and less enthusiasm when shown in private libraries, less and less breathless suspense when exposed in the pulpit of the auction room. The era of favourite English authors in first editions seems destined long to remain. Never again will a Valdarfer Boccaccio find a Dibdin to celebrate its sale; nor will its sale again found a club.

In this country the change which began with collectors who hunted for Americana was extended afterward to Hawthorne and Longfellow — to “Fanshawe,” “Grandfather’s Chair,” “Voices of the Night,” and “Coplas.” Then it naturally expanded to others, and with these came the favourite authors of England. Having embraced Thackeray and Dickens, it went backward to the Elizabethan writers and the writers of Commonwealth and Restoration times. As Mr. Foote led in one advance, so was Mr. Ives chief among pursuers in the other.

In the Arnold sale, where Milton’s “Paradise Lost” brought \$830, we saw to what heights Americans had carried the craze. In the sale about the same time, in London, of Walton’s “Angler” for more than \$2000, we saw where it had landed our English cousins. Each book had advanced enormously in market value within a generation. Walton’s book thirty years ago was worth only about \$150 — then

thought to be a great price, as indeed it relatively was.

It is improbable that we have reached a limit in the value of such books. With the advance of time they are likely to grow more scarce rather than more common. Such copies as come to light will be offset by copies that pass out of the market and into public or private collections. What would advance values more than these facts, would be the offering of copies in more perfect condition than previous ones. Any sought-for classic, when found in spotless condition, may always be depended upon to fetch more than an imperfect copy; to fetch double would be no uncommon result. Fielding's "Tom Jones," for example, in the original boards, has sold for three times the sum paid for the same edition in diamond calf when the edges of the leaves had been trimmed down by the binder.

It is not alone sufficient that a book shall be famous; mere fame will not make a first edition worth any large sum. Besides being famous, the book must also be rare. Hawthorne's "Fanshawe" has slight fame—hardly more than the fame which the author's name gives it, for it has small worth as literature, and Hawthorne did his best to suppress it. The fame of "The Scarlet Letter," meanwhile, is wide; but in the auction room "Fanshawe" would probably fetch twenty times what "The Scarlet Letter" would bring. There has never been any great price realized for "Childe Harold," because the edition was large and

copies are common; but Byron's "Hours of Idleness" or his "English Bards" is sure of a good price any day. To this rule there would seem to be some exception in the case of Thackeray and Dickens, but there has lately been a decided recession in the Thackeray and Dickens wave of enthusiasm, and collectors now demand copies in the original paper covers, advertisements and all included in the demand.

An interesting phase of collecting is the care devoted to newer authors—to Andrew Lang, to Kipling, to Stevenson, for aught one knows to Barrie and Maclaren, the cause of which would seem to lie in a faith that the fame of these writers will grow with time and their books become more and more sought after in first editions. But the books of these writers in most cases were published in large editions. Kipling's first books, however, appeared in India, and are very scarce already, and one or two of Stevenson's are difficult to obtain; but for their later works the future would seem to hold forth no great allurements.

A special type of bibliomania in this country relates to Americana, and rightly so. Here are shown industry and enthusiasm quite equal to any ever shown in Europe in the bravest days of old for Aldine classics, early commentaries, or fifteenth-century printed books. Fine examples of the fact were seen in the Brinley sale. Eliot Bibles are not properly rare books,—not in the highest sense of the

word "rare." Almost every important collection of Americana has a copy; Mr. Brinley had seven, besides a copy of the New Testament printed two years before the Bible, and yet they fetch from \$400 to \$1000 each. Of many books by the Mathers this is measurably true also, and so of the rarest productions of the Franklin, Zenger, and Bradford presses. Where Dolet's Commentary and beautiful specimens of printing would go begging for better offers than \$10—or perhaps not as much as that—these American books find a ready sale at \$100, \$200, and \$500. Some years ago a gentleman from Brooklyn purchased in a London book-store, for \$5, a copy of the Eliot Bible. It was one of only twenty-five copies printed, having the dedication to King Charles II., and of which a copy sold at the Brinley sale for just \$1000. An Eliot Bible was picked up in Nassau Street some years ago for \$50. It was sold afterward to a collector for \$400. The collector paid \$125 for having it cleaned and bound, and sold it again for \$900.

Coincident with these changes has come a change in second-hand book selling. The lamentations of the old-time dealer have been spoken with frequency and not without pathos. The change is as marked as it seems likely to be permanent. Beginning among what may be called the more modest grades of the trade, it has extended upward to the finer shops. Not only has the subject risen to the dignity of treatment in one of the great monthly magazines of Lon-



don, but reports about it have been printed from provincial English centres. The story scarcely varies in general tone, whatever be the town it comes from. Everywhere has the second-hand trade been bad—in Sheffield, in Dundee, in Leeds, in Dublin.

In our own land much the same conditions prevail, and from similar causes. A tour of Nassau or Canal Street will not disclose the same number of shops that once were found there. Book-shops still exist in those thoroughfares, but the character of their trade has changed. The chances of finding a rare volume on the sidewalk are now extremely few. This has resulted directly from an increase in collecting and in knowledge of rare books. More and more have the uptown shops and the auction rooms become places where collectors go to find rare and first editions. Before the pursuit had risen to the present proportions these books were rarely found in New York above the City Hall, save at small second-hand dealers' shops in dark basements on Canal Street and lower Fourth and Sixth avenues. Now they are found in the best stores, where are maintained thriving departments devoted to these books, and whence are issued special catalogues of them.

## V

### PROFITS IN RARE BOOKS

FEW persons will believe that the buying of old books is a profitable undertaking. Common opinion sets it down as an easy and agreeable way for a rich man to spend superfluous income, or a poor one to make way with earnings which ought to go into a savings bank. If made with proper diligence and discrimination, a library of rare books may become as good an investment as an elevator filled with corn or a cellar packed with old wine.

When the Menzies collection of Americana was sold, about twenty-five years ago, this fact was forcibly impressed upon collectors. It was an open secret that the library had brought double what it cost, Americana having appreciated wonderfully in value. The books sold for \$48,000, a small sum indeed compared to what libraries have since been sold for.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> By occupation Mr. Menzies was a lumber merchant. One day a customer who had called at his house was kept waiting in the parlour, where he found on the table Mr. Menzies' most recent purchase—a scarce treasure in faultless condition, the tops of the leaves still uncut. Finding the leaves an obstruction in examining the book, this man of trade proceeded to tear them open with his forefinger, leaving ragged edges and seriously damaging the value of the book. When Mr.

Later came the sale of the Brinley collection, which realized \$127,000: it had not cost Mr. Brinley anywhere near that sum. Many volumes which sold for large prices he had been able, through rare industry and thorough knowledge, to pick up for trifles. Stories of his goings about among ancient New England farm-houses and the dusky book-stalls of Boston and New York were many and quaint. Had he left a diary of these bibliographical tours, it would have furnished most entertaining reading. Mr. Brinley collected books before the prospective value of Americana had been foreseen. He often obtained permission in farm-houses to see "any old books" that might be stored away in chests and barrels, in barns and garrets. For small sums or by an exchange for modern popular authors, he many times secured treasures literally worth their weight in gold.

This is the most remarkable American library ever sold in this country. In the matter of price the next highest total was obtained for the Brayton Ives collection, which fetched \$124,235. Mr. Ives is the well-known banker of New York, and has been president of the Stock Exchange. The average for single works in the Ives collection was much higher than in the Brinley sale, being \$107.75 as against \$13.38. In fact, the Ives average is the highest that any

Menzies was afterward telling this story to a friend, he was asked, "Did you ever charge your customer with that book in your bill?" To which he replied, "Many times."

collection has ever secured at auction in New York. Mr. Ives's library, therefore, in uniform choiceness might be called the finest ever sold here. But it may be doubted if his collection, were it now to be sold again (it was first sold in 1891), would show the same advance that the Brinley collection would show. Competent judges have estimated that the Brinley books, were they sold to-day, would bring somewhere near \$250,000 dollars. But this would still leave the high average maintained by Mr. Ives's collection intact.

Would a man buy books on which his heirs may reap a substantial profit, let him buy Americana. They are as certain to rise in value as is any sort of possession a man can have. When the Deane books were sold in Boston a few years ago, they brought several thousand dollars more than they would have brought when Mr. Deane died. Of all American libraries, the greatest in the country is owned in Providence. It was gathered many years ago by John Carter Brown, when Americana were not costly. Its auction value to-day has been placed as high as \$1,000,000, and it might even sell for \$250,000 more. These figures made me once remark to a bibliographer that it must be the most valuable collection in the country. "Oh, no," said he, "there is one more valuable, and it is owned here in New York." But that collection is not so specially devoted to Americana. It is owned by Robert Hoe.

Among Americana the most costly book sold in

America at auction is the first edition of the "Letter of Columbus," published in Rome in 1493 — one of the smallest of Americana extant, comprising as it does only four leaves of thirty-four lines to the page. Only five copies are known, and for one of these in 1890 the sum of \$2900 was paid in New York. A book of much higher price, however, is Harriot's "Virginia" (1588), which is so rare that no copy has been sold at auction in nearly a century. The only perfect copy known is now in a private library. The owner is understood to have paid for it in the neighbourhood of \$4000. Another extremely rare American book is "The Bay Psalm Book" of 1640. Only two copies have been sold in this country. One of them in 1875 brought \$1025; the other in 1879, \$1200, the purchaser in the latter case being Cornelius Vanderbilt. Put up at auction to-day "The Bay Psalm Book" would bring far more than either of these prices. Good judges estimate its value at about \$5000.

Mr. Arnold's recent sales have forcibly shown what profits may still be made in collecting when good judgment is brought to the pursuit. He began to collect long after the demand for first editions of modern authors had become keen, and when many cautious souls believed the days of bargains had forever gone by. Mr. Arnold's copy of Hawthorne's "Fanshawe" cost him \$200, and he sold it for \$410;<sup>1</sup> his copy of Goldsmith's "Deserted Vil-

<sup>1</sup> It may be proper to add here that some twenty years ago a copy of Hawthorne's first book in the original edition, bound in boards,



lage," \$33.33, and he sold it for \$190; the original manuscript of Emerson's "Threnody," \$26.40, and it sold for \$300; a copy of Chapman's "Homer," with notes by Coleridge, \$110, and he sold it for \$635; the proof sheets of Browning's "Ring and the Book," with corrections, \$72.88, and it sold for \$680; a presentation copy of Keats's poems, \$71, and it realized \$500; a copy of Milton's "Paradise Lost," \$200, and it sold for \$830; a copy of Shelley's "Adonais," in the original covers, \$150, and he sold it for \$510.

Not many years ago there was sold in Boston a shabby old book called "Cushman's Sermon," of which only five copies were known to exist. It had never before turned up in an auction room, and it brought \$1000. Old sermons are not commonly regarded as literature. They are seldom interesting to read. Nor is the name of Cushman famous among writers of books. Why, then, this value? Cushman's sermon happens to be the first New England sermon that ever got into print. This was acquired by me for a very small sum. In one of the auction rooms, tied up with a bit of clothesline, appeared a collection of about thirty old American books, chiefly of the period 1820-1840, which were to be sold as one lot. By accident I discovered on the back of one of them the name "Fanshawe," and made a bid for the entire lot at so much per volume, the total cost to me being about \$3. After the sale, I removed the "Fanshawe" and had the remainder subsequently sold for \$1.50. This copy of "Fanshawe" a few years later, in an unguarded moment, I parted with for about \$50. It was in excellent condition, quite as good, it seems from the description, as Mr. Arnold's copy, which brought \$410.

fact and the excessive rarity of copies explain the price.

The romances of book auction rooms indeed would make a pretty volume, should some one gather and narrate them well. Along with this Cushman sale would go another, of which reports came at the same time, — Fitzgerald's version of "Omar Khayyam." Originally published in London, it fell as flat as ever book fell. Some 200 copies long lay on a shelf unsalable, and even when offered at one penny per copy the sale was slow. But in 1898, nearly forty years afterward, Bernard Quaritch, the original publisher, when seeking a copy of that first edition had to pay \$105 for it at auction. A still higher price would have to be paid now — probably \$300.

One of the choicest private collections ever made in England was that of Thomas Grenville, who lived to be ninety-six years of age, and devoted the last forty years of his life to making it. It comprises about 20,000 volumes, and is believed to have cost him all of \$270,000. Had it been sold at public auction, more than that would have been realized for it; it is one of the standing regrets of collectors that these books never came to the block. In 1845, a year before he died, Grenville gave them in his will to the British Museum, of which it still forms one of the brightest ornaments. When the Perkins collection, comprising only 865 lots, was sold in London, in 1873, it brought \$130,000 — an average of more than \$150 per lot. A copy of the Gutenberg, or Mazarin,

Bible, on vellum, sold for \$17,000, and another copy, on paper, for \$13,450—very handsome advance on the original purchase price.

But the collector must buy with discrimination. In the number and variety of its volumes, probably no private collection ever surpassed that of Richard Heber, brother of the Bishop. It was a miscellaneous collection in every department of literature, and had been purchased with little regard to cost. Heber had mere book hunger, in which taste and judgment had subordinate place. He is believed to have possessed in all 110,000 volumes, 30,000 of which he acquired at a single purchase. He had eight houses filled with books,—two in London, two in the country, and one each in Paris, Brussels, Antwerp, and Ghent, besides smaller collections elsewhere. When sold, in 1834, the books fetched \$285,000, which was a little more than half what they had cost.

In striking contrast with Heber's methods stand the methods of Bertram, Earl of Ashburnham, whose collection was sold in London, only a few years ago, for a sum in excess of \$300,000. This represented a profit, and, in the case of many books, very large ones. The Earl of Ashburnham in the main knew what to buy—what books collectors wanted or were likely to want. In a word, he had the same foresight that is shown by men who make money from other investments. He knew how to buy cheaply the things which would eventually be worth more. It is with books as with lands, stocks,

bonds, and merchandise. To make a profit one must buy what can be sold for more than one pays.

The only collection of books ever sold at auction for a larger sum than the Ashburnham collection was the Beckford library, gathered originally by the author of "Vathek," that brilliant Englishman, son of an alderman in London, who, in dying, made William Beckford "England's wealthiest son." Beckford was the builder of the famous Gothic pile called Fonthill Abbey, which had an enormous tower, that fell of its own weight while in process of construction.

Lord Ashburnham was a late survivor of those noblemen who, in the early years of this century, strove with each other in the book-shops and auction rooms. Dibdin chronicled their exploits, Dr. Ferriar sang their praises, voicing the delights their pastime afforded. Chief among their combats was the sale of the Valdarfer Boccaccio. Another event was the founding of the Roxburghe club; a relic of that club still surviving is the binding to which it gave a name. Great among the greatest of those mighty book hunters was Lord Spencer. All their passions for books, all their tastes and judgment, were inherited by Lord Ashburnham.

Lord Ashburnham collected through life. The passion had indeed been born in him while a boy at school, and it lasted until he died. Not in any fine additions to his ancient home, in pictures gathered, in political leadership, in aristocratic sport,

was fame sought, or the duty of his rank observed; but in collecting books. It is common testimony that he brought to this pursuit sound judgment, unerring taste, and unwearied patience—that greatest, as it is the rarest, quality in any collector, whether of books or money. All his life he had sought in vain for a perfect and clean copy of the Wycliffe Bible in manuscript, and one of the very last books he bought was a copy of that work. Anecdotes of his conquests multiplied after his death. He once bought at a Pall Mall shop for £600 three books afterward disposed of for great sums: one privately for £3000, another at auction for £1500, and the third at auction for £1000—in all, \$27,500 for books that cost \$3000.

Lord Ashburnham, when he had given an order to an agent to buy a certain book, meant that no limit was imposed; the book was to be bought, whatever the price: his wrath was certain to descend upon the head of a man who failed to remember this fact. He once gave a commission to buy a second folio Shakespeare, a clean copy in the original binding. Second folios were not then in much demand and were estimated in value at about £15. His agent kept bidding until the price ran to £60, when he dared not go any further and lost the book, to the Earl's lasting displeasure. Years afterward this incident was recalled in proof of the Earl's foresight. That copy of the second folio sold in 1864 for £146, and again, in 1896, for £540.



But here we are to remember that not only the value of books, but values in all things, have enormously advanced since Lord Ashburnham's time. His were among the rarest of all books, and no library of first editions, proportionately so extensive and choice, had before come to that pulpit over which sways the hammer of the auctioneer.

Supreme among rare books has been one for which in our time has been paid the highest price a book ever sold for at auction, the Gutenberg Bible. It has made a record for all countries. A noble copy was sold in London a few years ago for about \$20,000. This sum is in excess of any price yet paid for the work in this country, but this in part is due to the superior condition and character of the copy sold in London. In the Brinley sale of 1880, a copy brought \$8000. Eleven years afterward it was put up in the Ives sale, when it brought \$14,800.

Most specimens of early printing have fallen somewhat in price. The exceptions are the rarest and finest specimens, as well as those which are first editions of ancient authors. It is remarkable how few essential changes have been made in the art of printing since those early specimens were produced. The steam engine has vastly increased the rapidity with which impressions are made, but the methods now in use for the work of setting up and arranging type are practically the same as those employed at Mentz, Strasburg, and Venice four centuries ago. Alongside this curious fact exists the no less remark-

able one that books printed by Gutenberg and the Alduses were typographically the equals of the best that have ever been made since. Persons who have seen a page of Gutenberg's Bible must have been impressed with the truth of this. It may be said that there is not a printer in the world to-day who could make a handsomer page. Lovers of old books maintain, indeed, that this is not only the first book ever printed with movable types, but that it is the most perfect.

There were many causes that led to this perfection, chief among them the character of the men who, in the fifteenth century, were printers. They were scholars, and were commonly esteemed members of a learned profession. Master printers, as a rule, were acquainted with the Latin language. In many cases they were at the head of a band of educated and enlightened men, who recognized them as patrons of learning. Eminent scholars were proud to add their presence to the glory of the establishment of the elder Aldus, by becoming correctors for his press; they even acted as compositors.

At Paris, the printer Robert Estienne on a certain occasion was able to entertain in his own house ten of the wisest men of his time. He was himself the author of many books that came from his press, — some of them books of the greatest value that he published, — and in knowledge of Latin, Greek, and Hebrew few contemporaries surpassed him. We are told that the Latin tongue was spoken familiarly, not

only by himself and his friends, but by his wife and children. Many enlightened printers have been known in this century who separated their art from its commercial side and produced noble work; but eminent scholars, with a keen sense of beauty and proportion in type as well as in writing, have not been associated with them as correctors of the press in the sense that they were with Aldus and his contemporaries.

## VI

### PARKMAN AND SOME OF HIS "SOURCES"

PARKMAN, Bancroft, Prescott, Motley, Irving: these are the historians of past generations in this country whose writings may be said to remain potent still. Various have been their fortunes. Motley and Irving have been the most popular, but Bancroft won the earliest and highest fame. Parkman rose to his eminence slowly; indeed, he scarcely came into his own until old age had gathered round him, but chief among them all stands Parkman now. Bancroft seems already to have been threatened with being superseded, or at least with remaining no longer essential. Among all the historians who have written in English, where, in fact, save to Gibbon, shall we look for a superior to Parkman, in originality of research, accuracy of statement, and charm of style? Surely not to Macaulay, with his brilliant fragment steeped in partisanship; not to Hume, with his chronic indifference to facts; not to Green; not to Stubbs; nor to Freeman or Froude.

The biography of Parkman has directed the world's attention once more to the extraordinary difficulties under which Parkman accomplished his work. With eyes so weak that he was virtually unable to use

them at all in reading, and with other physical ailments, which for long periods unfitted him for any kind of intellectual work, he was able in the course of a long life to add to American literature its noblest monument among historical writings. How he accomplished so much, it may be doubted if any one will ever be able fully to understand. The more one reads his books and discovers the patient research on which they are based, the more this marvel grows.

Parkman entered a field of historical inquiry invaded by no one before his time. It was absolutely virgin soil. He constructed his narrative out of records stored away in the archives of families and states, foreign as well as American. His field was not only virgin soil, but of vast importance to any understanding of the history of America. For more than a hundred years a conflict was in progress here between forces which made for Anglo-Saxon civilization on the one hand, and for French on the other; between what we owe to Magna Charta, the Bill of Rights, and trial by jury, and what Latin races have preserved from the laws of Rome.

That conflict began with fur traders. It was continued by missionaries, — in the first instance, Jesuits; in the next, Episcopalians and Presbyterians. It involves the story of Frontenac, the siege of Louisbourg, the battle of Lake George, and the victory of Wolfe. It did not completely end until, at Detroit, only a few years before rebellion became rife in New York and



Boston harbours, the conspiracy of Pontiac was crushed out. By these events was worked out the problem whether in North America men should speak the language of Shakespeare or the tongue of Voltaire. That moving chronicle makes up the eleven volumes of Parkman's History.

His books are unrivalled among histories as books of the finest romance. The events he chronicled happened on frontiers; often at mere trading posts; sometimes on the shores of lakes, where no one dwelt except savages; again in the dense forest, as at Great Meadows, where Washington won his spurs as a soldier, and where, in the death of Jumonville, was fired the shot which, as Parkman says, "set the world on fire." No volumes have been written by any historian which Americans ought to read with more absorbing interest, or with minds more completely charmed.

It is not merely the theme which produces all this; not the savage martyrdom of Father Jogues, not the tales Bressani told, not the expedition of Pepperell, not Wolfe, wishing rather than to win the morrow's battle that he might have been the author of Gray's "Elegy" — that memorable scene on that momentous night before he scaled the heights of Quebec to win a renown that surely ought to last as well as Gray's. Parkman's style accounts measurably for the charm of all his books. While he has the restraint that befits the man of learning, he has elevation of style and picturesqueness. In the student and man of letters

we see the accomplished artist. Something of graceful dignity always abides with him, and at times superb grandeur is there. Many pitfalls of style into which Gibbon fell and for which the world has held Gibbon blameful, Parkman escaped. If he be not our hero among men of letters, where shall we find a better name to fill that place?

Parkman had no admirer more sincere than John Fiske, in whom was continued much of the charm of Parkman as to style. Not that Fiske's style was the same. It was quite distinctly another kind — more familiar, for one thing, and more uncertain in its level; but there was a pervasive and irresistible attraction in all the words Fiske ever wrote, whatever might be his theme. In research he could not rival Parkman. His sources were often secondary, while Parkman's were almost always primary. For Fiske the pioneer ground had been opened already; for him came the opportunity to interpret events and movements, to present historical pictures, to draw parallels, and to show the relations of events here with events that were contemporary with them in the older lands of the other hemisphere. In these senses John Fiske for his generation shone as a beneficent force shedding radiance all around him.

Civilization in America did not begin with the landing of the Pilgrims at Plymouth; nor does the history of it begin with the books of Bradford or Winthrop. Parkman has taught us this. Before the Pilgrims had reached their rock-bound coast,

before Winthrop had sailed, Jamestown had been planted, or ever this isle of Manhattan had been sold to Peter Minuit, Europeans of another race and faith had gone inland, along great rivers and across great lakes, to rear aloft in the forests of America the twin torches of knowledge and faith. These men were Jesuits from France, and their labours were performed in many parts of America — for one thing, in Central New York, but mainly in lands bordering on the great western Lakes. Educated in European schools, familiar with the highest life of France and Italy, known alike in bishops' palaces and at secular courts, they were accomplished scholars, who took up their stern tasks in a new and savage land for the glory of God and the Church. Of what they saw and performed they made conscientious records, and they sent their records home, to the chiefs of their order in Paris and Rome.

The result has been that nowhere else in our historical literature have we had such exhaustive, well-written, altogether striking narratives of life and adventure from the pens of pioneers. Parkman knew this, and no man to better purposes; for without the "Jesuit Relations" Parkman could never have written some of his books. Other historians have known it, and hundreds of scholars as well. Collectors with large purses have not only known it, but have gladly parted with considerable sums of money, in order to acquire copies of any of those scarce books. James Lenox found in them a corner-stone for his

library, one of whose choicest ornaments they still remain.

No complete collection of the original "Relations" ever has been made, and only a few collections of them notable for any suggestion of completeness anywhere exist. What the new edition, edited by Reuben Gold Thwaites, aims to accomplish is not alone completeness. Besides all the printed works preserved in Europe or here, it embraces others that existed only in the manuscript state. And it does something more: it gives on one page the original French or Latin text, and on the other an English translation of it. To say that it has been a boon to American history is to express the merest truism. There has not occurred in this country, at any one time, any fact of mere editing and printing that is comparable in importance to this in historical literature. The New York documents edited by Dr. O'Callaghan were of great moment to New York State, but here are works that have importance to many states. Here are source books from which a long procession of books make their start.

In very considerable degree does recorded history in North America begin in these books. They are fountains, and the waters they give forth are clear as crystal, and radiant as sunlight. Their writers had style, and with it charm. Writing as they often did in the most squalid surroundings, in Indian huts, or in the open forest, persecuted by the savages, at best living under privation, they still wrote as scholars

and men of culture. Their correspondents were sometimes great bishops, and again were kings or queens. With every word they wrote, inspired as it was by events and scenes actually described, the life and veracity, the quality called actuality, are of a potent sort which gives to the letters a fascination unrivalled in epistolary literature.



## VII

### SCOTT'S SURVIVING POPULARITY

THE enormous increase in fiction—in the volumes produced and in the new men who rise to contemporary fame by writing them—has often raised the question: Do the older novelists hold their own? And consequently it has been argued that Thackeray and Dickens must have fewer readers than formerly, and that even Scott is passing into some neglect. Careful observers have never been disturbed by these questions, neither as to Thackeray nor as to Dickens, and still more positively not in the case of Scott, who, more than any other prose writer of his period, wrote, not for an age, but for all time.

The most certain evidence of Scott's survival is the successive editions of his works that the public calls for. Four or five entirely new ones have in a single recent year been brought out in England. They have been designed to meet all classes, tastes, and purses, and there is no lack of demand for them. Fears have been expressed that the supply might prove to be greater than the public would absorb, but thus far has been seen nothing to confirm them. On the contrary, a series of letters from British book-

sellers, printed in the *London Academy* a few years ago, goes to prove their groundlessness.<sup>1</sup>

Many causes might be named for this survival. Scott's writings are instinct with life, truth, and charm, and yet are pure and wholesome. He wrote beautifully because he wrote truthfully. In him was verified the art axiom that truth is beauty, and beauty truth. Scott pictured periods that are of lasting human interest and pictured them accurately. He

<sup>1</sup> Here are some of the reports these booksellers make:—

"A well-known Oxford Street firm writes: 'The demand for the *Waverley Novels* is as great as ever, but we think the supply is considerably in excess of the demand. During the past year the public have been subscribing to five or six editions. On the whole, there is no declension in the sale of Scott's novels, and we are of opinion that they will continue to sell for many years to come.'

"Another London firm replies: 'Undoubtedly Scott is holding his position with the public. To sum up, in our experience, Scott, as a novelist, is only second in demand to Dickens.'

"Still another London report says: 'The demand for Scott is steadily increasing, and at no time have buyers had such a large variety of editions from which to choose.'

"From Edinburgh comes this reply: 'Always a demand for Scott, although five new editions seem too many. Scott is certainly holding his own.'

"A West Country correspondent replies as follows (note his startling suggestion that yet another edition is called for): 'There is still an opening for a "people's Scott." It is beyond dispute that the sales of the works of Dickens and Scott never seem to decrease; and although there are some five new editions of the *Waverley Novels* just put on the market, each of them seems likely to find purchasers.'

"Lastly, hear the voice of Exeter, furthest removed from the scenes of the *Waverley Novels*, yet not least enthusiastic: 'All editions sell steadily. It appears as if the public could not have enough of Scott. In my opinion no author is so largely purchased in complete editions.'

showed us men and women who led sane and manly lives and lived to the nobler ends. He did not distort human nature: he ennobled it.

Integrity in Scott was not merely commercial integrity, magnificent as was the final exhibition his life gave of that endowment. Scott had intellectual soundness, the integrity which in writing fiction will not consciously misrepresent a period or lie about human nature. We may not see in Fielding and Smollett the worst vices of the early eighteenth century, but it is certain that we do not see in their work what was best in the life of that time. Thackeray's sarcasm may not have lashed the cant and snobbishness of his age with all the force they deserved; but Thackeray might have inspired his readers with some finer enthusiasm had he held loftier notions of his fellow-men. Dickens exalted the life of the common people: he showed us their sufferings, their heroism, their better nature; much that was of the basest possible sort he also showed us. But his was the exaggerated picture: it was strong, purposeful, powerful fiction, but wanting in strict intellectual integrity. Though never properly to be called caricature, his work often approached dangerously near it.

Scott took sane views of life. If he was optimistic, he was not an optimist who was visionary. He saw good in everything, believing the main forces in human activity work for beneficent ends—that, as an eminent countryman of his afterward said, the great soul of this world is just. His writings must

survive to delight a yet more remote posterity. So long as there is honour in the world, so long as there is truth, they will find a home.

In his own life and conduct he saw not sordid things, not the ignoble mind, not the base spirit. Sound himself to the heart's core, he had interest only in things which were honest and of good repute. It is not altogether the genius of Scott that has preserved his popularity. His character, that final test of all excellence, remains a large factor. Readers feel instinctively that here they have an author in whom the man of honour and the man of genius are one. No man in English literature since Milton has better united both characters; none in all literature since Dante.

Scott's Edinburgh house, with its tragic associations and the story of how fondly he lingered over it when the crash came, might well be a place of world pilgrimage. The passages in his diary which refer to it are among the most pathetic in that moving and valiant chronicle. Here were spent twenty-odd years of joy and labour. Here he had success and realized his fame. Here "Waverley" was begun, and here was written many another book the world knows by heart. In the rear yard one of his dogs lies buried. The place even now has scarcely been altered since his time. Mementos of him remain on its walls, an autograph letter of his is there, also one of Burns; but the present tenant has no relation to literature. The agent of a mortgage company interested in New

Zealand lands occupies the house — or did, not so very long ago.

Scott went forth from this Edinburgh house to do the work which, to those who set a higher value on character than performance, elevated the man to a place which mere authorship never could have won. We may justly set our lower values upon Scott's later writings and foresee the time when his life of Napoleon shall be no more than a literary curiosity, but the man who so valiantly converted his pen into a very sword, with which to fight his way to freedom (a fight which his books triumphantly won for his estate after he was dead), must always remain something better for our race than anything he ever wrote — an example and a possession fit to place in any company of heroes.



## VIII

### MEMOIRS AND MEMOIR WRITERS

THE past hundred years has brought into the world a remarkable storehouse of information concerning the private lives of famous men of letters. With here and there an exception, authors in no former age had been much written about. For purposes of publication memoir writing was scarcely more than an occasional pastime when the nineteenth century began. Autobiographies had appeared from Gibbon, Colley Cibber, and Lord Herbert of Cherbury; but this form of writing had been rare in literature when Moore edited the letters of Byron and the diaries of Pepys and Evelyn were brought to light. Of Samuel Johnson, thanks to Boswell's way of doing his work as a finality, the world knew as much as it knows to-day. But how much was known of Sterne or Gray, Fielding or Milton? Adequate biographies of these authors were not undertaken until times we may still call recent.

So soon as Byron was dead all men who had known him took to writing reminiscences, from Leigh Hunt to Moore, from Medwin to Kennedy and Dallas. Byron's own works comprise many volumes, but the books written about him ere he had been many

years in his grave comprise more. Byron's potent and interesting personality, that "pageant of his bleeding heart," accounted for all this. He was not only the most celebrated poet but the most celebrated Englishman of his time. Financial magnates, noble lords, and prime ministers yielded place to him as interesting personalities. Shelley caught the homage of the hour when he called him "the pilgrim of eternity." Byron in large measure was the cause of this rapid spread of memoir writing and publishing — his career in part, but in still larger part his custom of making his personality enter so largely into everything he wrote, his intensely subjective method. The sale of the Byron books was very large. It seemed impossible to satisfy the demand for new ones. Authors and publishers alike saw what a field had here lain unworked. The next generation found no longer existing a dearth of literary reminiscences.

Many years ago the compiler of an interesting volume of extracts from books of the memoir class printed an elaborate list of authors, from whom he quoted. For each of four volumes he named about eighty distinct publications or 330 less the duplicates. It was a striking evidence of the extraordinary growth of this class of literature. It pointed also to the impossibility of reading more than a small part of it during any one short and active life. The list applied only to men of letters, having been selected with no reference to statesmen, actors, or men en-

gaged in other professions, about whom long lists could have been easily compiled.

Few men of letters have ever written dull memoirs. The facts seem to reverse some notions as to egotistical persons being social bores. Obviously there are forms of egotism which give rare delight. How else could autobiography have acquired a fascination, such as no other kind of writing in the historical class possesses in like degree? Men whose other writings find few if any readers to-day — and, for example, Colley Cibber — wrote stories of their own lives which no one can read without pleasure. Franklin's fame as an author with a large portion of mankind rests entirely with his autobiography. Many schoolboys had read that book long before they knew what was Franklin's real and fixed place in the world's history.

When the Carlyle books came out after his death, criticism was made of him as a great egotist, perpetually throwing himself into what he wrote. This was true as to the facts, and yet his writings lose none of their worth or interest because of it. We as human beings have lasting interest in all things genuinely human, whether it be deep suffering, high intelligence, or great success. Byron, in wedding his own unhappiness to immortal verse, aroused enthusiasm as well as sympathy. A touch of nature once more made the world kin.

Carlyle preached nothing more persistently than heroism and reverence for heroes. As an author, if

not as a husband, he made it manifest that he was himself a hero, great as his own Luther, Knox, or Cromwell. That quality of nobility in labour, joined almost to an unconsciousness of it, gave his reminiscences rare interest, and the fame of them after two decades has scarcely dimmed. Small and sordid natures displease us when they talk of themselves. The noble ones confer priceless blessings. They make the world wider, life becomes easier, and duty more simple. To write of one's self and not be a bore, one must write in noble ways of things themselves noble, must show, in fact, that it is an immortal soul and not a mere sordid nature that prompts the words.

To what extremity in bare literalness, in rash frankness, memoir writing has of late years gone, is best illustrated in two works of quite recent years — the autobiography of Hamerton and the memoirs of Hare. Each writer had been known to a wide circle, although neither had reached what could be called high distinction in literature. Certain points of similarity in experience give to the earlier page of both works features remarkably similar. Each writer had had an unhappy childhood. In the one case the father, made miserable by the loss of his wife, took to strong drink — deep potations of brandy were his daily indulgence — and he abused his son brutally ; in the other, both parents regretted the son's birth, gladly turned him over to relatives, and never thenceforth paid him any attention — indeed, seldom ever saw him.

The two stories made melancholy reading and were narrated with a literal frankness that made one shrink from the page. Such pictures of family life among well-to-do English folk are perhaps more common than the world is wont to suspect; the Englishman at his best is a charming being,—at his worst, an offence and a menace. It was extraordinary that both Hamerton and Hare should have written with such fulness and exactness. The Englishman is commonly a man of much reserve, with great family pride, but here were memoir writers opening wide the doors to closets wherein grim skeletons hung. In Hare's case the disclosures related not only to his father and mother, but to many other relatives—brothers, uncles, aunts, and cousins. Jealousies and small quarrels were set forth with the utmost freedom and as if they were of weight and moment to the world. If one did not tire of them (family quarrels are things that most persons seldom tire of hearing described) one certainly never ceased to wonder at a writer devoid of wish to conceal them. Neither in Hamerton's case nor Hare's were these details material to the formation of a character, except in the sense of being injurious; nor did they seriously aid in shaping a career.

But such were the beginnings from which came careers well known to a large world—Hamerton, with those books of his, chief among them "The Intellectual Life"; Hare, with books almost as well known. Born in Rome, reared in an English rectory,



educated in Oxford, a man of much leisure in large continental towns, Hare had had the wide experience in walks about Rome and Paris without which his books, charmed they never so powerfully, could not possess their serious and peculiar value.

Our later years have seen books of memoirs more inspiring and more certain of remembrance—that memoir of Tennyson by his son, chief perhaps among them all, and several splendid collections of letters—the Brownings', Hugo's, Stevenson's, Lowell's, Bismarck's—a noble company fit for long remembrance and perpetual benediction to readers who shall come after them. Once more, and for the twentieth time, they remind us how rich is literature in this class of writing, and how each year makes the world richer still.

Nothing in books attracts more strongly the best minds; certainly not fiction, not the history of nations, not books of travel and adventure in far-off lands. The "Diary" of Pepys holds sway where Dryden fails. Cowper's "Letters" are better reading than Cowper's verse. Boswell is cherished where Johnson's own writings are neglected. Even the "Letters" of Lowell promise to afford delight in that remote time when Lowell's verse shall have become an unfamiliar source of pleasure. When the popular works of this hour shall have become unknown names, men will read and take delight in Audubon's "Journals," in which we see with force and charm a man superior to the slings and arrows of evil fortune,

There was Max Müller's book, which no dry-as-dust Orientalist wrote. A strong-souled, sound-minded, eminently human man shone forth in delightful reminiscences of a boyhood spent in Germany, a manhood in Oxford, recollections of Goethe and Lowell, of Tennyson and Gladstone, of Pusey and Oliver Wendell Holmes.

Hugo's letters deepened the already keen interest we had in all things known of his life. From poverty he advanced to independence, with money enough to support his wife and children, were he to die; and then, with a revolution overturning France once more, he was an exile in Brussels and Guernsey, where he lived on 1200 francs a year, mourning the death of John Brown and the crisis in our republic. He was ever vital and human in all he wrote of himself, strong in purpose, fixed in ideals.

Hugo's life was as romantic as any story he ever told. Born with Napoleon in the full flush of power, his parents had been identified with the two opposing parties, which in the late years of the eighteenth century had been in violent struggle for supremacy in France. His mother was an ardent Royalist, a native of La Vendée, that last, most unyielding stronghold of Church and nobility. She had part in the famous insurrections, where a hundred thousand lives are believed to have been lost, and with Mesdames de Bouchamp and de La Rochejaquelein was surrounded in a wood and subdued after the insurrection had long baffled the skill of generals to put

it down. Hugo's paternal grandfather belonged to the old nobility, dated his title from the middle of the sixteenth century, and died on the scaffold under Robespierre. The father of the poet linked his fortunes with Bonaparte, became a general in his army, and finally a governor of important provinces in Spain. Before the boy was five years of age, General Hugo's office had carried him to Elba, Corsica, and Switzerland, and then into Calabria to suppress an insurrection. Into these countries he took his son, and in Italy allowed him to study Roman history and the Italian language. Before young Hugo was eight he had seen Spain.

It was fitting that a child who had witnessed so much should develop talents early. He wrote verse of striking merit in the tenth year of his age, thus offering a parallel to the precocity of many English authors — Pope, Chatterton, and Bryant, not to mention Tasso among Italians.

If in early life Hugo saw poverty, at its close he had what for an author was affluence. In middle age he was fairly independent, but in exile he again saw laborious days. Some years before the Revolution of 1848 he said that after twenty-eight years of exertion, the total of his earnings had been "about 500,000 francs," all from the use of his pen, or an average of about \$3600 a year. Meanwhile he had educated four children, and with true independence had declined to accept scholarships, not wishing to "saddle the state with what I could pay myself."

Of these 500,000 francs Hugo still possessed 300,000 francs, all invested and yielding an income from which, were he to die, his wife and children might live. From this income and from the writing he was still doing, he was now able to support eleven persons. He owed no man anything. He had made nothing in trade or speculation. He gave something to charity; wore overcoats that cost him twenty-five francs; seldom had a new hat; walked in winter without a fall and went to the legislative chamber on foot. He counted living happy in that he preserved the two blessings without which he could not live — “tranquil conscience and complete independence.”

Then came the revolution and his exile — first in Brussels and next in the island of Guernsey, where he established his home “on the summit of a rock, with all the grandeur of the world and the sky before me.” Here at Guernsey he wrote “The Toilers of the Sea.” Poverty fenced him round. “I must live like a Stoic and a poor man,” he wrote. With a bed, a table, and two chairs, he toiled with his pen each day and lived on 1200 francs a year.

In turning from memoirs such as these to the memoirs of Talleyrand, we turn from charming frankness to studied reserve. Long had those memoirs been awaited, pertaining as they do to one of the fruitfulest subjects of memoir writing the world has known, a complete set of all extant books on Napoleon’s era, forming a library of many hundred

volumes. The Metternich, Rémusat, and Marbot memoirs, works of the highest value concerning that era, preceded the memoirs of Talleyrand by a few years only; but from Talleyrand even greater things were with reason looked for. He and the Emperor, in later years, did not love each other, having quarrelled long before the exile to Elba. His "irreverent reverence of Autun" had foreseen and predicted the Emperor's overthrow, and had indeed helped to bring it about, assisting gladly in the restoration of the Bourbon king.

Louis Napoleon was in mortal dread of things which those memoirs might disclose about his uncle, and in 1868, when they were announced for publication, procured a postponement for twenty years. The restriction appears to have been finally removed only by the low state of the Bonaparte fortunes. Talleyrand in his message to posterity failed completely to make a sensation. The memoirs had either been edited into a state of innocuousness or the author wrote them with particular circumspection. He had a way in his lifetime of using language to conceal thought. The world had some right after waiting half a century to expect that he would tell the truth in his memoirs. He always declared that they would set him right, especially with the church. But they neither set him right nor set him wrong. They were interesting, as was inevitable, but decorous and devoid of colour. No books of the memoir class from a person of distinction have



in twenty years been found so uninteresting and been neglected so soon.

From minor walks of life few notable memoirs have appeared. This, of course, is understandable. Happy have been the individuals, as well as the nations, that had no history—no stories to tell. Noble lives in these walks there have been of which the world possesses no written records and which must remain forever unknown—resolute souls that have kept the world strong and made life beautiful, the very names forgotten beyond recall. One such record, widely read, has, however, appeared in recent years, but it evoked as much blame as praise for the author of it—Barrie's "Margaret Ogilvy."

Barrie's sketch of his mother carried wide comment as to the propriety of a son thus writing of a mother whose life had been exclusively domestic. Margaret Ogilvy was a plain, obscure Scotch woman, her life absorbed in home duties, her one ambition the success of her son in literature,—and he gave her fame. Deep consciousness of debt to her, a debt deeper perhaps than most sons owe to a mother, prompted the tribute. It is true that the sketch shed light on Scottish life, but a desire to do so probably had no part in Barrie's motive. His aim was essentially personal, although with fine art instincts the methods employed obscured the aim. Barrie must have foreseen the criticism his act would evoke, and must have known he could not thwart it.

He desired to acknowledge the obligation exactly in this manner. There was no other manner in which he could acknowledge it with the same certainty of effect.

There, accordingly, the record stands in all its publicity, for the public to read as it will or as it will not. Barrie's motive was disinterested and even devotional. That he made money from the book is not less true than it was inevitable. The act he desired to perform he could not perform and avoid getting publishers' checks for it. True, he might have published the book privately, but it would then have failed of wide circulation. The world could not have known the manner of woman his mother was, the faith she had in him, the inspiration she gave him. Barrie's purpose would have missed fulfilment.

The reminiscences of Elizabeth Cady Stanton reminded us how much women have done to increase the delights men take in memoirs. What a store of pleasure lies ready for any one who has not read Caroline Fox's "Memories of Old Friends," and how sweet and beneficent a life is unfolded in the recollections of Mary Cowden Clarke. Readers several years ago saw in Mrs. Sherwood's "An Epistle to Posterity" how wide a range of experience had been possible to an American woman, with recollections going back to childhood,—when, in riding from a railway station to Marshfield, she sat on a box with Daniel Webster,—and embracing Rome and Paris,

England and Switzerland. What profit and charm also lie in the "Letters" of Dorothy Osborne, and the biography of one of the sweetest and bravest of New England women, as described in the memoir of Louisa M. Alcott.

Mrs. Stanton's recollections, covering eighty years, reached the public as a surprise, having been almost unheralded. But they are interesting for more legitimate reasons—the impressive and protracted public career of the author; her inflexible devotion to and sincerity in a cause long unpopular. Whatever ridicule may have descended upon the woman's rights movement twenty or thirty years ago, one finds little of it extant now, and to more than any other cause this is due to Mrs. Stanton. She, from the first, gave the movement character, dignity, and grace.

Here was a woman—in the highest American sense well born, well educated, at home in polite society, welcome everywhere, a mother of many children, a devoted wife, an ornament alike to society and her sex. Twenty-five years ago, when a student in an American college, one morning in a lecture room there appeared in one of the front seats, to which she had been escorted by the president of the college, a woman with white hair, a round, cheerful, radiant face, and beautifully clad, with a carriage all grace and gentleness, to whom every boy in that crowded room would gladly have made respectful obeisance. She had a son in that class room, a boy whom we all

loved, who was the peer of our best,—and the woman was Elizabeth Cady Stanton.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A brief list of other memoir writers may be given here. Among literary men and women should at least be named: Sir Henry Taylor, Evelyn, Crabbe Robinson, Greeley, Newman, Julia Ward Howe, John Stuart Mill, Charles T. Congdon, and Henry F. Amiel. Among those whose books relate to public affairs, political and military, are these: General Grant, General Sherman, General Sheridan, Thomas H. Benton, James G. Blaine, Gouverneur Morris, Reuben Davis, Méneval, Bourrienne, Mme. Junot, Garibaldi, Cellini, Commines, Greville, Grammont, Saint-Simon, Mme. Campan, and Pepys. Others who do not readily fall into either of these classes are Franklin, Berlioz, Spurgeon, Samuel Breck, Audubon, Joseph Jefferson, Arthur Young, and Lord Herbert of Cherbury.

This list is not intended to be a select enumeration of the very best; nor has it been chosen at random. Some thirty writers are named. They are offered merely as among the best. Any restricted list would be likely to include the most of them.

## IX

### BURNS AS AN EDINBURGH LION

OF inadequate pecuniary rewards, where better shall we find an illustration than in Burns? Milton, Hawthorne, Carlyle, Poe, and all that company who struggled so long but not in vain, must yield first place to him.

The river Ayr is closely identified with the greater part of Burns's life. Dying at thirty-seven, all but ten years of a short career was spent in the Scottish shire to which this stream gives its name. Alloway, the birthplace, lies only a few miles from the town of Ayr, which has its site where the river enters the sea. On its banks one of the largest villages is Mauchline. The praise which Burns has bestowed upon those waters need not be ascribed to mere partiality. For half its course the Ayr is romantic and picturesque. With precipitous and rocky banks clothed with trees, its dark waters wind their way to the sea.

Burns was living on the Mossgiel farm when he published his first volume—that famous Kilmarnock edition of “Poems Chiefly in the Scottish Dialect,” now one of the scarcest volumes in the literature of that time, a single copy of it being worth several



times more than the whole edition cost the publishers. Kilmarnock lies not far from Mossgiel — to the northwest of it in the same Scotch shire. From the sale of this edition Burns derived £20, which sum he intended to use in paying for his passage to Jamaica. Great was the immediate popularity of the volume, with old and young alike, throughout Ayrshire. "I can well remember," wrote Robert Heron years afterward, "how even ploughboys and maidservants would have gladly bestowed the wages they earned most hardly, and with which they wanted to purchase necessary clothing, if they might procure the works of Burns." It was this volume which led the great Dugald Stewart to seek the acquaintance of Burns. But it led to a more momentous event in Burns's life — that triumphant visit to Edinburgh, the journey being made on a borrowed pony, which he rode from his home to the famous capital of the north, where the greatest honours a poet could receive awaited him.

It is worth while recalling here some of the incidents of that Edinburgh visit. Lion that he became in what was then perhaps the most exclusive literary society in the world, he lodged there for weeks with an old Mauchline acquaintance, sharing with him a single room and bed, for which they together paid three shillings a week. He sought out alone the neglected grave of Fergusson, knelt and kissed the sod above it, and resolved to erect the monument he afterward did raise there. Without a single letter of introduc-

tion, there was opened to him every door in Edinburgh. He not only won the good opinion of patrician men, but of high-born ladies, one of whom, a duchess, declared that he was the only man who in his behaviour and conversation had ever taken her off her feet. Francis Jeffrey, then a lad, saw him in the street, and never forgot the sight. Walter Scott, whose age was only fifteen, chanced to be in a room where Burns was entertained. The boy was able to supply him with some information which no one else happened to possess, whereupon Burns, as Scott afterward said, "rewarded me with a look and a word, which, though of mere civility, I then received with very great pleasure."

With every person whom he met Burns held his own in that intellectual capital. He showed, as Lockhart said, that in the society of the most eminent men of Scotland, he was where "he was entitled to be." Every one was struck by his manly bearing, and with the extraordinary vigour of his conversation. "Nothing perhaps was more remarkable," said Dugald Stewart, "among his various attainments, than the fluency, precision, and originality of his language when he spoke in company." Plainly dressed in his best farmer clothes, Burns manifested genuine freedom of spirit and originality of thought. Whatever might be the social superiority of those whom he met, he through higher intellectual gifts dominated the scene. It was this Edinburgh triumph, following the Kilmarnock success, which

finally induced Burns to abandon his Jamaica scheme and remain in Scotland, where only ten years of life remained ere the light of that heaven-inspired genius should go out forever amid such ignoble sorrow.

The birthplace of Burns, the cottage of clay which his father built with his own hands, may still be seen at the roadside as one travels from Ayr toward the bridge that crosses the Doon, — a cottage almost as familiar in the world as the famous Stratford cottage, — a bridge which Burns's own song has celebrated for all time. Not far from the cottage rise the small roofless walls of "the auld haunted kirk," forever connected with the story of Tam O'Shanter. Within the same enclosure of green sleep the forefathers of the hamlet, and among them the father of Burns. William Burns cultivated a nursery garden at Alloway and was a devout man of stern probity and firm temper — "a pleasant saint of the old Scottish stamp," Principal Shairp calls him. For that immortal picture of peasant life, "The Cotter's Saturday Night," Burns's own home at Alloway served as the model, after sketching which he declared with honest pride, —

From scenes like these Old Scotia's grandeur springs.

Burns was seven years old when the father gave up his nursery garden at Alloway and leased another farm two miles distant, bearing the name Mount Oliphant. Here the poet lived from his seventh to his eighteenth year, and here he received all the

education from teachers that he ever had — first from Murdoch, whom his father, combining with four neighbours, hired for the purpose, and second from the father himself. Murdoch's reminiscences of that time describe Gilbert Burns as having "all the mirth and liveliness," while Robert "wore generally a grave and thoughtful look."

At Mount Oliphant stern was the struggle the family had. Robert thrashed corn at thirteen, and at fifteen was his father's chief labourer in the field — a life which he afterward described as combining "the cheerless gloom of a hermit with the unceasing toil of a galley slave." Under Murdoch's influence he was started in knowledge of history and literature. He read lives of Hannibal and Wallace, and the writings of Fergusson. Smollett, Pope, and Addison became familiar to him. French he acquired readily. The landlord of Mount Oliphant had been generous in his treatment of the family, but he died while they were tenants. Their condition soon became hard, owing to a merciless factor, — a man "who wrote letters which set the whole family in tears." His name is forgotten, but his portrait the poet has drawn for all times.

Here, on this sterile soil, indications were first given of that genius for writing verse which was to win for the ploughman's son renown through the world. Burns's earliest lines, called sometimes "O, once I loved a Bonnie Lass," and sometimes "Handsome Nell," were composed at Mount Oliphant.

Nellie Kilpatrick, a young woman who laboured in the fields with Burns, was the heroine of this song.

Unable to endure at Mount Oliphant the rapacities of the factor whose letter set the family in tears, the poet's father in 1777 (the year of Burgoyne's surrender) removed to Lochlea, an upland, undulating farm of 130 acres in the Parish of Tarbolton. Here seven years were spent, and they were years of greater comfort than the family had known before.

Now began that absorbing pastime to which so many of Burns's early years were to be given—the making of love. Gilbert Burns has told us how his brother was in the secret of half the love affairs of the whole Parish of Tarbolton, and how he was never without at least one affair of his own. Robert had always a particular jealousy of people richer than himself or of more consequence; so that his love rarely settled on persons of this description.

In the Parish of Mauchline and two or three miles distant from Lochlea lies the farm of Moss-giel, to which in 1783 went the Burns brothers. They had taken a lease of it on their own account. Their father's affairs had been threatened with a crash. A few months later the father died and was buried in the old Alloway kirkyard. The widowed mother and the younger children then joined the brothers at Moss-giel—a farm of 118 upland acres, the soil one of clay, and poor.



Burns began life at Mossgiel with good resolutions, but to no successful results. "I read farming books," he says, "I calculated crops, I attended markets, and, in short, in spite of the devil, the world, and the flesh, I should have been a wise man; but the first year from unfortunately buying bad seed, the second from a late harvest, we lost half our crops. This overset all my wisdom."

Four years were spent at Mossgiel. Three things, says Principal Shairp, were witnessed by that bare moorland farm—"the wreck of his hopes as a farmer, the revelation of his genius as a poet, and the frailty of his character as a man." Love-making was a pastime which had filled a large part of his thoughts at Mossgiel. But he was not given to conviviality, for his brother has declared that his private outlays, including his clothing, never exceeded seven pounds a year. The farmhouse at Mossgiel still stands, although its walls have been raised and a slate roof has supplanted the thatched roof of the poet's time. The house stands sixty yards back from the roadway, from which it was shut out by a hedge of thorn, which the brothers are said to have planted. Back of the house lies the field where Burns ploughed up the daisy. It was in another field near this house that Burns overturned with his plough the mouse's nest.

The poems in which these events are commemorated were written here—in an upper room, or garret, reached by trap stairs. "Thither," says

Chambers, "when he had returned from his day's work, the poet used to retire and seat himself at a small deal table lighted by a narrow skylight in the roof to transcribe the verses which he had composed in the fields. His favourite time for composition was at the plough. Long years after, his sister, Mrs. Begg, used to tell how, when her brother had gone forth again to field work, she would steal up to the garret, and search the drawer of the deal table for the verses which Robert had newly transcribed." Here at Mossgiel were written not only "To a Mountain Daisy," but "The Cotter's Saturday Night" and many other compositions which gave to his first-published volume its immediate popularity all over Ayrshire.

Such were the scenes and such the privations amid which from her own soil Nature raised up that prince among Scotsmen,—the man in homespun, to whom in Edinburgh was easily accorded his intellectual inheritance, before whom the first minds and the first personalities of that capital, so soon as he appeared among them, gracefully made way. Elemental talents,—how greater far are they than all we may ever acquire in schools, and how to them the world bows down, casting aside its constructed framework of worldly rank, power, and wealth, and all its pretensions to superiority!

## X

### PEPYS, THE LITTLE AND THE GREAT

PEPYS'S Diary is one of the curiosities of all literature. Written as it was in cipher and solely for its author's pleasure, it lays bare an inner soul in its most secret thoughts. Never again are we likely to see so clearly exposed a man's follies and weaknesses. The reader is often at loss to understand how any one possessed of sanity could have written as Pepys wrote. His mental operations seem not infrequently like those of the underwitted, or as if a child's mind were at work. And yet Pepys had very considerable parts; he was a man of mark in his own day, intellectually and morally superior to his immediate environment.

The period the diary covers is about ten years. It lay in Magdalen College long neglected. In fact, it was not until the year 1819—or 115 years after the death of Pepys—that Mr. John Smith, an undergraduate of St. John's College, Cambridge, undertook, at the instance of the Master of Magdalen, a translation of the formidable manuscript. He was engaged on the work nearly three years, and occupied himself with it from twelve to fourteen hours each day. During his labours John Smith must

have shared many of the delightful sensations of another man of the same name when making explorations on the coast of North America. Four years after its completion Lord Braybrooke, a brother of the Master of Magdalen, published Smith's translation, with notes and a brief preface in which he boldly declared, what everybody has since admitted, that "there never was a publication more implicitly to be relied upon for the authenticity of its statements and the exactness with which every fact is detailed."

The Mynors Bright edition was published in London in six volumes several years ago, the last volume appearing in 1879. Mynors Bright was President and Senior Fellow of Magdalen College, Cambridge, when, in 1872, he had learned the cipher in which the book was written, and at the suggestion of a friend undertook to read the Diary afresh. The cipher used by Pepys was not the system known as "Rich's," as stated by Lord Braybrooke, but a system composed by Shelton and detailed in a book called "Tachy-graphy, or Short Writing: The most Easie, Exact, and Speedie." With the help of the edition of Shelton, published in 1671, Mr. Bright deciphered the whole manuscript, and the chief result was about one-third more matter than any former edition contained.

Mr. Bright's edition was at the time commonly accepted as final, although in his preface he acknowledged that he had neglected to use those parts which gave accounts of Pepys's daily work in office.

It appears, however, that whereas Mr. Bright added new matter equal to a third of the whole, he left unprinted about one-fifth of the whole. But he had translated the entire diary from that formidable manuscript in cipher filling six volumes and covering 3000 closely written pages, and he bequeathed his transcript to Magdalen College.

Mr. Wheatley's later and now the most complete edition is the result of a decision to print those portions of the translation which Bright did not print. In this edition we do not possess Pepys's entire work, for exception was made in the case of "a few passages which cannot possibly be printed." Mr. Wheatley, anticipating the charge of unnecessary squeamishness that has since come from readers, insisted that there was nothing squeamish about his decision and begged readers "to have faith in the judgment of the editor." Still the fact remains that the edition lacks completeness, and that nothing short of a personal examination of the manuscript at Oxford—certainly a difficult task even if a possible one—can enable any student of the work to know what these passages are.

Pepys wrote them sometimes in French, again in Latin or Greek, and even made use of Spanish. Mr. Bright, in making the translation, was at first surprised at these frequent uses of foreign tongues, and we may readily imagine what the feelings of the reverend gentleman were, once he had found their equivalents in his own tongue. There does not



seem to exist any good reason why Mr. Wheatley might not have allowed these passages to remain in the several foreign tongues used by Pepys, either as foot-notes or in the text. Certainly a custom which had before been employed, and notably in the case of Suetonius, might with advantage have been resorted to for the purpose of giving the world an absolutely complete version of this most famous and most interesting of all diaries ever written.

Readers of the Diary have seldom been impressed with its author as a man of elevated mind, large capacity for usefulness, or dignity of person, and yet we know that Pepys was much esteemed in his own day, and that the honours which came to him were fairly earned. No better evidence of this should be required than that which the pure-minded and enlightened John Evelyn wrote on the day of Pepys's death. "A very worthy, industrious, and curious person was Pepys," said he; "none in England exceeding him in knowledge of the navy." After his retirement from office, Evelyn described him as living at Clapham "in a very noble and sweet place, where he enjoyed the fruits of his labours in great prosperity."

Pepys was no inconsiderable personage in his time. Collier, who was his contemporary, affirms that he "was without exception the greatest and most useful minister that ever filled the same situations in England." The rules and establishments at the Admiralty, which remained in force when Collier wrote, were of Pepys's own introduction, and he was "a

most studious promoter" of order and discipline. In all persons whom he advanced in office the essentials required were "sobriety, diligence, capacity, loyalty, and subjection to command," and when these were wanting "no interest or authority were capable of moving him in favour of the highest pretender." He discharged his duty "with perfect integrity" and neglected his own fortune. He was held in great esteem for his learning and judgment, and he was uncommonly munificent in the advancement of industry, learning, and the arts. Collier regarded his morality as "the severest morality of a philosopher." Morality is, of course, relative. Collier's statement, true of Pepys in his time, could not be true in ours.

Better testimony than the words of Collier is the fact that John Evelyn was Pepys's friend. Scott said of Evelyn that his "*Sylva*" was still the manual of English planters, and that his life, manners, and principles, as illustrated in his memoirs, ought equally to be the manual of English gentlemen. Evelyn records that Pepys "had been for near forty years so much my particular friend that Mr. Jackson sent me complete mourning, desiring me to be one to hold up the pall of his magnificent obsequies," and adds that Pepys "was universally beloved, hospitable, generous, learned in many things, skilled in music, and a very great cherisher of learned men, of whom he had the conversation." Pepys died in reduced circumstances, though he had seen very prosperous days.

The integrity of Pepys was beyond question, the esteem in which he was held was great, and his learning found admirers. Many public enterprises were directly benefited by him, and when he rose to office as Secretary to the Admiralty the appointment was strictly a reward of merit, no man in England being thought to possess equal qualifications. How well he conducted himself in office needs no proof further than what is on record. He, along with very few, had the courage to remain at his post in London during the awful plague which desolated that town in the time of the second Charles.

Not only did Pepys survive all the mutations of office in Charles's time, but he held on into the reign of the second James, at whose coronation, such was the rank to which he had risen, Pepys marched in the procession immediately behind the canopy of the King. Pepys, we are to remember (and be this said to his lasting honour), in that dissolute age of adventure, while still without settled means of support, made no ambitious marriage: his wife was Elizabeth St. Michael, her parents French, "a beautiful and portionless girl of fifteen."

The most trivial and casual items in this Diary show a thousand times the complete sincerity with which Pepys everywhere discloses his real nature. Sir Arthur Helps long ago remarked that his diary was the truest book ever written. Thackeray's praise of "Tom Jones," as affording a rare picture of a real man, may be applied to the Diary of Pepys; for no-

where among the writings of men, either in books intended for publication, letters intended for the person to whom they were addressed, or in other writings of which we know, can be found so thorough a revelation of the secret impulses, actual feelings, and pleasures which pervade the life-history of a human being.

Pepys, using a cipher, felt absolutely secure in his privacy. He never poses, never writes for any one but himself, and probably never before, among all the records human hands have made with pens, was so lucid and trustworthy a record made of the secret workings of a man's heart. Pepys, after his time, was a worldly-minded man, ambitious to be with the great, but faithful in the discharge of trusts. He had more than one human weakness, — a marked love of himself, more or less inexcusable self-indulgence, and in many things was vain. These facts are incontestible; and yet no one can overlook the commendation which John Evelyn bestowed.

All this goes to show us once more how little we ever know what men and women really are. We know only the outsides of them. Of the individual with whom we daily associate, we form estimates with which prompt agreement might be obtained from others. But many times these estimates stand at variance with the person we should see, could he only be made to disclose himself in a diary after the manner of Pepys.

Little did Pepys dream, when writing that he

"must be contented to set down no more than is fit for them [his family] and all the world to know," that in one hundred years his secrets would be published, and thus made to constitute a book that would be as much talked about as any in the language. Autobiographies are always charming reading, but, with rare exceptions, they have been written for publication. Their authors pose, and conceal what would really be the most interesting facts.

It is the surpassing merit of Pepys's book that it conceals nothing — absolutely nothing. Carlyle, when he had finished his "French Revolution," said to Mrs. Carlyle, "My Jeannie, lass, they have not had for two hundred years any book that came more truly from a man's very heart." In a different sense from what Carlyle meant, but still in a true sense, the Diary of Pepys "came from a man's very heart." It was not a heart swayed with emotion such as Bunyan knew when he wrote his wonderfully truthful book, or such as Carlyle knew when writing for dear life itself and under an intense moral impulse. It was simply a heart swayed by the common everyday emotions of human nature. There was no tragedy in Pepys's life, and for the most part his years were peaceful. Had he played some heroic part on a large stage, the world would think better of his morals, no doubt, but the interest of these volumes would scarcely have been heightened. It is the human nature in them that absorbs our interest. There is no room for the hero.



## XI

### CHESTERFIELD, THE FORGOTTEN AND THE REMEMBERED

LORD CHESTERFIELD'S view of life was essentially a sordid one. The rewards he has obtained are the reverse of those he sought. As usually happens in this world, they are exactly the rewards he deserved, and in this there is much to console us. Chesterfield's personal and political prestige, great as it was, has been utterly forgotten. He is remembered as an author — the very last honour he could have sought. This honour has come to him, not from things which he published himself, or ever wished published, but from private letters he never intended the world should see, and which quite likely he would have burned rather than had printed. Mr. Sayle, one of his editors, has properly cited this as another example of the fact that "our best work is that which is our heart production." In Chesterfield's other achievements nothing was quite genuine; certainly nothing was disinterested, and that fact long since was found out. Mankind judged his worldly and selfish activities at their full value and proceeded, as its manner is, to forget them.

Could Chesterfield have had his own way, and

made impossible the publication of these letters, his name would have passed into oblivion. Scarcely any one ever thinks of him as having been something more in his day than an author. And yet he was the English ambassador to The Hague, made speeches that were admired, and was Viceroy of Ireland and Secretary of State, offices in which he gained considerable contemporary renown. From them he derived the reputation he enjoyed. It was that reputation, moreover, which inspired the active interest which the public afterward bestowed upon his letters, when his daughter-in-law took the liberty of making them public.

Chesterfield's failure to obtain the highest eminence as a statesman has been attributed to the caution of his nature. He was a man in whom moderation of mind was the normal state. Well-balanced though he was, his mind lacked energy and concentration of purpose. Chesterfield never got outside himself and matters of immediate gain. He seems forever to have been conscious of what he was doing for the moment, adjusting means to ends in a small immediate way. Large views were beyond his vision; in them he would have lost sense of grasp and actual possession. What Lord Carnarvon, his editor, has praised as self-control in Chesterfield, was the quality fatal to his advancement.

With all his worldly wisdom he was not far-sighted. He understood human nature in its ordinary motives; he even saw, what few men of his time saw

better, that France was on the verge of a Revolution which would shake her from foundation stone to centre; but more often there was a strange limit to his range. Johnson's famous letter illustrates the fact in one way, and the son, to whose education he gave such attention, illustrates it in another. His confidence in the character of this commonplace son indicated singular absence of insight; the faith he had in his godson was not less singular.

Chesterfield's life was not happy. In his scheme, contests for high stakes were conspicuous, and he often lost. When old age came he was a disappointed man. Few pictures, as has been pointed out, are more saddening, few offer a better theme for the moralist than this aged worldling in the splendour of his lonely home awaiting the arrival of his dead son's widow and children. Well might he say he was "extremely weary of this silly world." Silly the world doubtless did seem to one who had taken such coldly selfish views of its opportunities and of a man's duties in it.

Lord Carnarvon has attributed the disparaging popular estimates of Chesterfield in part to the fact that in the world of literature, where his rank and title counted for comparatively so little, he had the misfortune "to incur the enmity of three men whose writings have had extraordinary currency, and one of them extraordinary authority" — Horace Walpole, Lord Hervey, and Dr. Johnson — all of whom have said "the bitterest things of him that wit and sar-

casm and intellectual power could devise." There is something of truth in the observation, at least in the case of Dr. Johnson, for the story of the Dictionary will live with Johnson's name; but too much cannot be inferred from it. Sarcasm will not survive as a force for a hundred years unless well deserved. Most men have had enemies; most public ones have been subjects of the bitterest word attacks, and yet those who deserved them not have easily outlived them. Chesterfield has not outlived them because, with all their exaggeration, they had truth for basis. There may have been extenuating circumstances in the case of the Dictionary, but Chesterfield was not a man to give Johnson offence, had he been able to discover Johnson's real position in the world of thought and power. Worldly wisdom alone would have saved him.

In his letters Chesterfield discloses himself. Therein were written down the things he actually thought and believed. Bad as some of these things were, they have enjoyed more than a century of life because truth and not falsehood lay in them. We value Chesterfield's letters for very much the same reason that we value the diary of Pepys: the man is there, naked and not ashamed.

The artistic value of the letters offers by no means the slightest claim to appreciation of them. A man who could write such charming prose in personal letters to a son, possessed a mind highly endowed. A rare intelligence marks every sentence, with artistic

understanding of the force and meaning of words. Many are crowded with wisdom fit for all times and men in all stations. The misfortune is that along with all this there exists so much that is unwholesome. A sordid mind is often seen at work, with an eye for the main chance, and a desire for the success we call worldly.

When a few years ago a second and new collection of Chesterfield's Letters appeared, they in many ways recalled the more familiar collection. There were seen the same charm of diction, the same exquisite but depressing worldliness, the same faith in mere manners as a road to success, the same elaborate patience and unwearied devotion to an unworthy object. Chesterfield had now become an old man, with ambition dead in his heart, and his life certain not to last long. Sorrows and disappointments that strike vital parts had come to him. The time surely was at hand when we might hope to see the man as his better nature was.

Chesterfield wrote the first of these new letters in 1761 and the last in 1770; George III. had ascended the English throne a year before the first date; Chesterfield died a year after the latter. His natural son's death preceded his own, and Chesterfield had been many years out of office. Reflections on his career in office scarcely afforded him better satisfaction than reflections on his domestic life. Marriage had not been a source of happiness. He and his wife loved each other not more the older they became. Except



for the natural child who was to disappoint him, he had been childless. His letters to that natural son had been published by the widow of that son without permission from Chesterfield. He had come to be talked about for acts of his life which he thought least worthy of public attention.

The new letters are like the old ones save for the immorality. Chesterfield's altered attitude came of old age. The sins of his youth must have been sufficiently hateful in his remembrance. Lord Carnarvon does not overstate the truth when he ventures the opinion that "private sorrows, and public disappointments, and the heavy hand of age, and, still more, the natural kindliness of temper which had been concealed under the polish of society, had led him in the sunset of life to a somewhat different estimate of right and wrong from that which he once possessed."

When the first of the new letters were written Chesterfield's godson was a mere child, just able to write his first letters; when the last were penned he was a man grown. Chesterfield flattered himself that the earldom would acquire new lustre from his successor. Never did father show greater zeal or more disinterested devotion to make a young man wise, witty, and accomplished. He sent him presents in money, and commended his every good act and every good report he heard of him; directed him in small matters of personal behaviour; wrote him letters in French; sent him to school (to the famous, or rather

infamous, as he afterward became, Dr. Dodd), and manifested unremitting interest in the character and progress of all his studies.

It is a melancholy thought that the young man never even approached a realization of Chesterfield's hopes. He must have been an uncommonly stupid boy, while as a man, if not stupid, he was unquestionably commonplace and uninteresting. Mme. d'Arblay thought in 1790 that Chesterfield "would blush to behold his successor." "He has as little breeding," said she, "as any man I ever met with." The best that Lord Carnarvon could say for him was that he pleased George III. as Master of the Horse, and had accuracy and method enough to keep a diary and a weather record. He says plainly that the utmost word possible for him is that he "was a sensible and kindly if rather commonplace man, whose life was the absolute opposite to that of his godfather, and whose mental qualities were eclipsed by the brilliant memories of his predecessor." The result illustrates, as if the irony of it had come from design, the fatal defect in Chesterfield's whole scheme of life — his overestimate of the value of the outsides of things. He had strange inability to see what things were real and what were not.

Some of this wise old man's advice to his godson, whose ambition never rose much above the pleasures of a country gentleman's life, redeem Chesterfield at times from the charge of unrepentant worldliness. He rises here almost into the region of the moralist.

One comes across passages which make him half suspect there was something noble in the system of Chesterfield, after all. It certainly is not the Chesterfield of popular acceptance who composed the following sentence:—

“Let us, then, not only scatter benefits, but even strew flowers for our fellow-travellers in the rugged ways of this wretched world.”

Nor is it that kind of man who wrote these:—

“Your duty to man is very short and clear; it is only to do to him whatever you would be willing that he should do to you. And remember in all the business of your life to ask your conscience this question, Should I be willing that this should be done to me? If your conscience, which will always tell you truth, answers no, do not do that thing. Observe these rules, and you will be happy in this world and still happier in the next.”

“Carefully avoid all affectation either of mind or body. It is a very true and a very trite observation that no man is ridiculous for being what he really is, but for affecting to be what he is not. No man is awkward by nature, but by affecting to be genteel, and I have known many a man of common sense pass generally for a fool because he affected a degree of wit that God had denied him. A ploughman is by no means awkward in the exercise of his trade, but would be exceedingly ridiculous if he attempted the airs and graces of a man of fashion.”

“What is commonly called in the world a man or

a woman of spirit are the two most detestable and most dangerous animals that inhabit it. They are strong-headed, captious, jealous, offended without reason, and offending with as little. The man of spirit has immediate recourse to his sword, and the woman of spirit to her tongue, and it is hard to say which of the two is the most mischievous weapon."

"Speak to the King with full as little concern (though with more respect) as you would to your equals. This is the distinguishing characteristic of a gentleman and a man of the world."

Elsewhere he explains that by "low company" he does not mean "people of low birth, for birth goes for nothing with me, nor I hope with you." The company to which he referred was "obscure, insignificant people, unknown and unseen in the polite part of the world, and distinguished by no one particular merit or talent, unless perhaps by soaking and sotting out their evenings."

Repeatedly he reminded the youth of the importance of his bearing, and we infer with good reason that there was need for it. Occasionally in these passages his wit comes to the surface with its old polish, as in the following:—

"A gentleman's air in walking, sitting, and standing is one of those important little things which must be carefully attended to, for little things only please little minds, and the majority of little minds is very great."

"You have an odious trick of not looking people

in the face who speak to you or whom you speak to. This is a most shocking trick, and implies guilt, fear, or inattention, and you must absolutely be cured of it, or nobody will love you."

"That silly article of dress is no trifle. Never be the first nor the last in the fashion. Wear as fine clothes as those of your rank commonly do, and rather better than worse, and when you are well dressed once a day do not seem to know that you have any clothes on at all, but let your carriage and motion be as easy as they would be in your night gowns."

"Let your address when you first come into any company be modest, but without the least bashfulness or sheepishness, steady without impudence, and as unembarrassed as if you were in your own room. This is a difficult point to hit, and therefore deserves great attention; nothing but a long usage of the world and in the best company can possibly give it."



## XII

### LORD HERBERT OF CHERBURY

LORD HERBERT's autobiography has long been famous with bibliophiles. Mr. Swinburne has included it in a list of the hundred greatest books. Lord Herbert is altogether unknown to general readers. Heretofore, as Sidney Lee has pointed out, the work has been taken as a literary curiosity, interesting solely to bookish men. First printed by Horace Walpole at his Strawberry Hill press after it had delighted private companies when read aloud from the manuscript, it has since been several times reprinted, though never with that frequency which would entitle one to say it had passed into general circulation.

Mr. Lee has made a scholarly and exhaustive investigation of Lord Herbert's life in the historical spirit; the full fruits of his labours have been attractively set forth in a long essay on Lord Herbert's character, an extremely interesting continuation of his life from the point where the autobiography leaves off, an appendix containing numerous letters, documents, and extended notes, and finally in a series of foot-notes at once helpful, corrective, and entertaining. To have done so much means patient,

dreary research, such as only those appreciate who have attempted. His reward will probably be wholly inadequate to the merits of the performance. For the most part, it will consist purely of the thanks of every buyer of his edition and of his own consciousness of having made a substantial contribution to literary history and the study of human nature.

Lord Herbert, from the strictly human point of view, is about as curious, not to say amazing, a character as books afford. There is no question that he was possessed of mental powers entirely out of the common. Ben Jonson wrote some complimentary lines about him, which, though filled with the exaggeration usual in the seventeenth century, disclose the eminence to which Lord Herbert's intellectual faculties had raised him in the minds of his contemporaries. His writings on philosophical subjects interested Descartes, who spoke of them with respect. To this day they awaken esteem from all who look into them. Mr. Lee is cordial and unequivocal in praise of them. As a man who anticipated great opinions, Lord Herbert stands apart; some of the opinions first advanced by him had two centuries to wait before the great world came round to them. He has been likened, in certain senses, to Lord Bacon, and this without irreverence: he accepted no man's judgment in place of his own; acknowledged contemporary authorities he had sufficient originality and courage to pass by.

As a man to be likened intellectually unto Bacon,

the opportunity ends here. While it was not true of him, as of Bacon, that he was the wisest and brightest of his fellows, it was probably still more true of him than of his great contemporary, that he was the "meanest of mankind." Perhaps meanness is not exactly the word for Lord Herbert, but in its strict and narrow sense it falls not far short of it. For human vanity of the prodigious and unconscious kind, commend a seeker to his autobiography. Vainglorious is the word for its every page. Another word is stark worldliness. Lord Herbert lived in the age of Mr. Worldly Wiseman, it is true, but scarcely any man, intellectually endowed as he was, ever set so high a value on purely worldly things.

It is worldly triumphs alone that Lord Herbert records in that book. He is proud of nothing so much as of his face and figure, his great conquests among women, the empty compliments paid him in foreign lands, and the bumptious promptness with which he challenges a man to "fight with me" — and yet never fights. During the heyday of his manhood, he appears to have had considerable reputation for soldierly qualities and fidelity to his king. But when the first severe test came along, at the outbreak of the civil war, he showed the white feather at the first demand upon him. Pitiable to an extreme is the picture of Lord Herbert's last days. One can easily understand how every friend of the Stuarts and of the cause of kings could echo from his heart the name applied to him of "the black Lord Herbert."

That Lord Herbert was vain beyond what most men understand as vanity, the mere fact that he wrote this vainglorious book, and in his will gave directions for its publication, sufficiently shows. He is prouder of the achievements recorded here than of all he ever did for science and philosophy; these he barely mentions, while incidents in his life which most men would have blushed to relate, and would have threatened to assault others for relating, Lord Herbert set down as creditable performances; by them he hoped his descendants and posterity in general would remember, extol, and respect him.

There is evidence on every page of the work that Lord Herbert was not a truthful man. If he does not lie in direct Anglo-Saxon way, he does actually and constantly prevaricate by the suppression of essential facts and by a free indulgence in those perversions that come of prejudice and selfish feeling. Mr. Lee convicts him of many offences on this score, one of the most characteristic being that, in an account of his ancestors, he fails to mention that two of them, whose prowess he especially records, had their heads cut off. Lord Herbert protests, however, that he is a man of truth, and that his natural disposition and inclinations are contrary to falsehood. "I can affirm to all the world truly," he says, "that from my infancy to this hour I told not willingly anything that was false, my soul naturally having an antipathy to lying and deceit."

In forgiveness, also, he believed himself to be an

exceptional man. He certainly had a heavy enough weight of offences to be forgiven for, from unblushing and carefully recorded conjugal infidelity to treason to Charles I., to whose cause, according to all human if not all divine rules of honour and gratitude, he should have adhered. Of his capacity for forgiveness Lord Herbert says: "And certainly forgiveness will be proper, in which kind I am confident no man of my time has exceeded me; for though when my honour hath been engaged no man hath ever been more forward to hazard his life, yet when, with my honour, I could forgive, I never used revenge, as leaving it always to God, who, the less I punish mine enemies, will conflict so much the more punishment on them." On which passage Walpole tersely remarked, "Is it forgiveness to remit a punishment on the hope of it being doubled?"

Lord Herbert believed several curious things about himself, from the yarn of a tailor that he had grown taller after he reached middle life to the compliments of servants that his soiled clothes were sweet. Another belief was that he had a pulse on the crown of his head. He was conscious that he possessed great knowledge of drugs, and professed to have cured invalids who had been declared incurable. When he travelled through France and Italy, he swallowed so easily and digested to such curious purpose the formal compliments paid him at first meetings, that he appears really to have believed his fame as a courtier and soldier was Continental.



A strong light is shed on this feature of his vanity in the fact that, when he became the English Ambassador to France, the banker to whom he applied for a letter of credit, and whom his predecessor had dealt with, had never heard of him; in other words, the man who believed his name famous in the capitals of Europe was unknown to a prominent money-lender in the capital city, where he had arrived as an Ambassador. While staying in France in the time of Henry IV. he attended several balls, "in all which it pleased the Queen publicly to place me next to her chair, not without the wonder of some and the envy of another who was wont to have that favour." He returned from abroad, greatly elated at the triumphal progress he appears to think he had made, and, says he, "was in great esteem both in court and city, many of the greatest desiring my company." He obviously accepted these honours as tributes to his personal worth, rather than his official station.

As the reader journeys through Lord Herbert's 250 pages he meets with challenges "to fight with me" on about every twentieth page. With the most amusing self-satisfaction he details the full story of these affairs, thinking himself a very paragon of knightly valour. That the most of his challenges were absurd, even for that age, when duelling had again become common, goes without saying. His own records show what his friends thought of some of them. Perhaps the absurdest challenge he ever sent went to a blundering French magistrate who had

sent him to jail. While Ambassador to France, he had a stormy interview with one of the King's favourites and afterward proposed to send him a challenge, protesting again and again to James I. that he was ready to make good all he had said, with his sword. He once suspected his house was attacked by robbers. Sword in hand and undressed he "ran out, opened the doors suddenly, and charged ten or twelve of them with that fury that they ran away, some throwing away their halberds, others hustling their fellows to make them go faster."

While in Paris some of his attendants had a quarrel in the street, and were driven back within the gates of his house by "great multitudes." Seeing this from a window, Lord Herbert says he "ran out with his sword, which the people no sooner saw but they fled again as fast as ever they entered." Narratives like these remind one of Thackeray's "Tremendous Adventures of Major Gahagan." It was men like Lord Herbert whose follies and vanities gave Cervantes his immortal opportunity. He protests that he always fought for others, challenging men who had injured ladies and gentlemen. "I never had a quarrel with man for my own sake," he says, and "never without occasion quarrelled with anybody." Moreover, "as little did anybody attempt to give me offence, as having as clear a reputation for courage as whosoever of my time."

For a man so invincible in single combat as Lord Herbert believed himself to be, and yet who appears

never to have fought one duel strictly so to be called (although he found it necessary to defend himself on one occasion from an attack in an open place at Whitehall made by an injured husband, who had threatened to shoot him at sight), the closing scenes of his life were pitiable and ignominious enough. As Ambassador in Paris he had lived with ostentatious extravagance, far exceeding the limits, not only of his salary, but of his private income. The result was debts too heavy to pay. He asked help from the state, and constantly made his appearance at court in the character of petitioner for money.

His elevation to the peerage—an honour not niggardly conferred in those times—was about the only result of childish and persistent pleadings. Except for the help of the Duke of Buckingham (George Villiers) he might not have received even that. When Buckingham was assassinated, the sole prospect he had of gaining anything else completely vanished. His son, meanwhile, had emulated his example by living riotously and impoverishing him; his wife, to whose happiness he appears to have made slight contributions, had died; his own health was failing, and, the first notes of the civil war (deaf as Lord Herbert's ears were to the loudest of them) were beginning to unsettle the political future of England.

Lord Herbert had no political foresight whatever. Not the least curious instance of this in the autobiography is his failure altogether to mention Riche-lieu, who during Herbert's career as Ambassador had

become a commanding and foremost figure. This failure was entirely consistent with his habit of seeing the outsides and ornamental parts of things only. There is no evidence that Lord Herbert realized the meaning of the civil war in England, or had any thought for the issue except as it affected his own fortune and personal comfort. With his son, his grandson, and a brother fighting for the throne of the Stuarts, and with lifelong obligations and associations binding him to the same cause, he surrendered without resistance his stronghold, Montgomery Castle, to the Parliamentary forces on terms that secured his own safety and personal ease. He afterward made formal submission to Parliament, actually petitioned it for money, and at last secured a personal allowance of £20 a week. This was the sort of spirit that remained after Parliament had sent him to the Tower, and he had been released only when making a handsome apology for his offence.

So inglorious an end for one who professed himself one of the most courageous, valiant, and honourable men of his time is sufficiently sickening and saddening for any one who would take the better view of human nature. It is almost incredible that he shared a common parentage with George Herbert, the poet, who in his own lifetime was regarded almost as a saint by his Salisbury neighbours. That he paid dearly in his last years for the follies and sins of early life is really a matter for consolation, though Mr. Lee seems to doubt if his actual suffering was great, so consuming was his vanity.

### XIII

#### GIBBON'S SOLITARY GRANDEUR

THE appearance of three octavo volumes devoted to writings by Edward Gibbon, in large part before unpublished, was well esteemed in the wisest circles the literary event of most importance during that recent year when they were published; but they were not talked about; nor were they much read. Probably not more than a thousand persons in this country have yet seen them. No American publisher has reprinted them; nor is one likely to do so. But nowhere else could we find among the books of that year one of more vital interest to real literature, abounding, as the volumes do, in a large mass of new matter pertaining to the author of one of the greatest books written since time began.

It is true that parts of these volumes have seen the light before, but the manner in which they saw it, especially in the case of the autobiography, was altogether exceptional, if not wholly unprecedented. The autobiography which we were already familiar with, one of the most famous in our language, while the work of Gibbon's hand, is not his work as he produced it. Gibbon wrote not one autobiography but seven, and the one we have always known, published



by the first Lord Sheffield, was a piece of literary carpentry ; it had been constructed by Lord Sheffield out of the seven that Gibbon wrote.

This extraordinary fact was due to editorial methods that were tolerated in an earlier and easier time. While they explain the act, they in no way excuse it. Granting it was proper for Lord Sheffield to use such methods at all, he employed them well ; but why should he not have done the thing his grandson so recently did — print the whole seven as Gibbon left them ? We may say such a publication would have abounded in repetitions and that there would have been wanting unity and order, but Gibbon's autobiographical writings we should then have had just as Gibbon produced them — not as Lord Sheffield shuffled them about and patched them together. Lord Sheffield's conduct was perhaps not more unwarranted than was John Wilson Croker's with Boswell. But the one act, as well as the other, will never be pardoned in any court where literary ethics are respected.

Why Gibbon wrote seven autobiographies and left none of them completed must remain unexplained. That he took great pains with all of them is clear enough. Gibbon was by nature disposed to indolence, but once he set about a task, whether to write the "Decline and Fall," or to write a letter, he gave to the work a master's hand. The very fact that he wrote seven autobiographies shows the care he bestowed upon his work, the solicitude he had for

it and his desire to put his best expression into it. There are chapters in the "Decline and Fall" which were written with probably less care, so sure was his knowledge of Rome, so completely had the chapters been thought out. In the later volumes of this history he did not always resort to any re-writing. It is well known that he had pride in the fact that the work was published after none save himself and the printer had read the manuscript.

Gibbon wrote the autobiographies with deliberate intention that at least one of them should be published. Had he lived longer (and he had carefully computed that, in the ordinary course of nature, he had several years yet to his account) he would unquestionably have produced a final version compounded of the seven. Lord Sheffield doubtless knew this, but for him to do what Gibbon intended to do was clearly a straining of the duties of friendship. Friendship might bear the strain, but literature could not.

The charm that lies in Gibbon's story of his own life rests not in any striking events chronicled. He chronicles none, for there was none to chronicle. Gibbon's life was lost in his work. He at one time had ambition to make a mark in Parliament, but it was short-lived. He saw early, and saw clearly, that no road to eminence was open to him in that council chamber. Doubtless he would never have sought success there at all had he known the fame which the "Decline and Fall" would bring him.

Gibbon in his letters we see in a light that in many

ways essentially readjusts former estimates of his personality. For one thing he was not the prig he has sometimes been represented to have been. A genuine human heart beat beneath the gorgeous waistcoat he wore. He was capable of an intense and lifelong friendship, and he had distinct sense of humour. Through long years he toiled terribly, but he could entertain friends, play at cards, drink late and deep, and endure the gout with the fortitude of a true-born Englishman. If he had his foibles, and among them vanity, he had conspicuous virtues—a sound heart, a strong sense of duty, a steadfast soul.

We may condemn Lord Sheffield's act of amalgamation. Were such an act performed in our times, we should condemn it without reserve. But the end of the eighteenth century had not the code of literary ethics that we have now. Jared Sparks, with a high hand, was yet to edit Washington, and Boswell was to be drawn and quartered by Croker. Time, however, brings its revenges. As Sparks has had his Ford and Croker his Hill, so has the first Lord Sheffield had his grandson, the third and present lord.

These new letters were almost exclusively addressed to Gibbon's father, his stepmother, and his friend, Lord Sheffield. Character shines in them all. As a son he was constantly dutiful, devoted, obedient, sympathetic. His stepmother outlived him. Through many years, however, when the care of a large estate, heavily encumbered and unproductive,

gave him interminable trouble, his kindness to her, his solicitude, affection, and honourable dealings with her, were unbroken. With Lord Sheffield he stood in terms of close intimacy; it was a fraternal relation, charming alike in its steadfastness and its good-fellowship. Indeed, as Gibbon was an author with one book, so he seems to have been a man with one friend.

Gibbon's life in London kept him in the great social and political world, but of that experience the sole evidence here presented is contained in letters to this friend and to his stepmother. Gibbon knew and admired Burke and Fox, and Pitt and Sheridan he must have met almost daily; but they pass before the reader as scarcely more than names. His letters abound in allusions to smaller matters that came closer to his heart—his stepmother's welfare, his father's estate, Lord Sheffield's home and family, his own house, and his little pleasures.

But with all that is disclosed respecting character, the letters leave untold a far greater story in Gibbon's life—the story of the means by which he wrote his history. Charmed as we may be with reading them, we close the book with a sigh of regret that the mystery of a great writer's work remains a mystery still. The letters teach us nothing. The immortal book he was writing seldom ever was referred to. Page after page may be read in the very years when he is known to have been deep in toil, without a word set down pertaining to it.

In 1764 he wrote from Florence to his stepmother, "I have never lost sight of the undertaking I laid the foundation of at Lausanne, and I do not despair of being able one day to produce something by way of a description of ancient Italy which may be of some use to the public and of some credit to myself —" a passage which recalls the famous one in the autobiography referring to the project he formed while musing at Rome among the ruins of the Capitol. Nine years later he wrote again, "I am just at present engaged in a great historical work, no less than a history of the decline and fall of the Roman Empire, with the first volume of which I may very possibly oppress the public next winter."

In a correspondence that was frequent with his stepmother, these are almost the sole allusions he makes to a work into which his whole life was put. To his friend, Lord Sheffield, he wrote, "I am just now in the most busy moment of my life; nor is it so small a work as you may imagine to destroy a great empire." In this offhand, almost playful way did Gibbon refer to his tremendous labours. Letter after letter follows, with seldom any reference to his studies. Finally, in 1779, he wrote: "My second volume advances, and I hope will be finished within the ensuing year. You were right as to the benefit I derived from the first; under the pressure of various difficulties it proved a seasonable and useful friend; but if it supported, it did not enrich its author." After he had gone to Lausanne as his final



residence he wrote to his stepmother: "My private life is a gentle and not unpleasing continuation of my old labours, and I am again involved, as I shall be for some years, in the decline and fall of the Roman Empire. Some fame, some profit, and the assurance of daily amusement encourage me to persist."

Was ever a great author more silent about his own work? Vain as Gibbon may have been in some personal matters, none of the vanity of an author was shown in his correspondence. His intimacy with Sheffield was of the closest kind, and yet we find Sheffield reproaching him with having permitted the fact that he was producing a continuation of the history to reach the ears of his friends through the newspapers. Sheffield could not at first believe the news. He accepted the information only when its truth was confirmed by Gibbon's London publisher.

One sees here a part of that magnificent reserve which forms at once the charm, the glory, and the effective force of the history itself. Never did an author write a book and leave behind fewer evidences of his toil; never was workman so absolutely unknown by his chips. Gibbon was the most self-centred of authors. Consummate literary artist that he was, he sought from others none of that sympathy which artists commonly value so much and often need so much. Here, again, we see the Roman strength of the man. His history moves forward as the work of a master sure of every step. We may be certain he was wholly unabashed when a royal duke, with

profanity in his mouth, reproached him with "always scribbling, scribbling, scribbling." And when Horace Walpole regretted to his face that "so clever an author should write on so dull a subject," we can feel the magnificent reserve with which Gibbon modestly ventured to say such a history "had never been put together before." Walpole, in his own account of this conversation, contemptuously remarks that Gibbon, with his "button mouth" screwed up, wanted to say the history "had never been put together before so well," but, instead of the final word, "gulped it." A wiser public than Walpole wrote for has long since opened the door and bowed Walpole out of court.

Gibbon has declared that "few works of merit and importance have been created either in a garret or a palace." The remark has occasioned surprise, since history abounds in illustrations to the contrary—for example, Dr. Johnson and Goldsmith in the one instance, Cæsar and Marcus Aurelius in the other. Gibbon himself had neither poverty nor riches; but he had an encumbrance which to most men, and above all to most authors, would have been a greater hindrance than either—an embarrassed, poorly productive estate, out of which his stepmother was to be supported and his own position in the world maintained.

His correspondence is burdened with the affairs of this property from his youth down to his latest days. There were interminable annoyances, failures to col-

lect rents, failures to effect sales, trouble with the holders of mortgages, and debts accumulating. Had Gibbon dwelt in a garret, his life must have run its course in less troubled waters. But he was never actually unhappy; indeed, he often proclaimed his happiness. Again and again he was thankful that he had a mind capable of looking on the bright sides of things.

There is real truth, however, in Gibbon's remark, when applied to historical writing — at least in so far as the remark relates to poverty. Men dependent on their labour for support cannot well write history. Froude managed to do it, but with sore trial and much distress. Most historians, like Gibbon, have had some certainty as to income. Macaulay, Freeman, Parkman, Prescott, all had private means. The novelist may be a poor man, for if his books succeed and he writes enough of them, he will be sure of an income on which to live. The historian, unlike the novelist, cannot write a book within six months or a year and repeat the achievement indefinitely. He must spend many years or a whole lifetime at the task, and then he may get scant financial reward when his labour is done and old age is upon him.

In a passage already quoted, Gibbon remarks that his book, "if it supported, did not enrich its author." His emoluments must have been pitifully small from that book when we remember the years he gave to his task and the cost of his library. Had he lived to know what success in a succeeding generation Scott

was to win for writing another kind of history, and Byron for celebrating in song the land Gibbon celebrated in prose, the contrast might well have evoked from him some of those interesting philosophical reflections in which his writings abound.

No monument, except at his grave, has been raised to Gibbon's memory. Should a monument ever be set up, its most fitting promoters would be professional men of letters. Never lived an author who bestowed a like renown upon their calling and was in like degree loyal to it. Carlyle has written finely of the fame of those who write great books as a thing surpassing other fame; but Gibbon did more than observe this fact and record it: he was sincerely proud of it. There cannot be any question that when he cited the family of Confucius as "the most illustrious in the world," he set down what he believed to be a simple truth. Descent, to his mind, was more honourable when it came from a great writer than when it came from a great prince. He would have valued descent from Chaucer as a nobler heritage than descent from the Norman William. There are passages in Gibbon's life which do not make us think of him as a hero. When he "sighed as a lover and obeyed as a son," he played no heroic part. But in his life as an author, in his domestic conduct, and in his friendships the hero was writ large all through Gibbon's life.

Alongside that history a crowd of famous works produced in Gibbon's time, as well as before and

since his time, fade into the second or even lesser rank. Surely it is not Samuel Johnson, it is not Hume, not Macaulay, Greene, or Carlyle, who has written a book comparable with it either in intrinsic and permanent worth, in splendour of achievement, or in value to mankind. When Byron called it a bridge from the ancient world to the modern he characterized it in terms singularly fit and still final. Gibbon reared an enduring edifice; he crossed a vast and unknown chasm. A world dead to men's knowledge was made to live once more. More than a century has passed since Gibbon wrote. Not all the learning men have since acquired, not all the attacks churchmen have directed against certain of his chapters, have dislodged the book from its place as a book for all time.

The greatest personal lesson taught by Gibbon is the supreme importance of doing with all one's power some one thing well worth doing. It is the lesson of consecration to a good object and the lesson of fixity of purpose. Gibbon practically did nothing except write that book. He sat in two Parliaments, but he made no mark there, finding his talents not well employed. He was a member of the Board of Trade; but he was attracted to the place, not by its work, but by its salary. For the rest there is nothing to record except the care of an embarrassed estate and a lifelong friendship.

The historian of the later days of the Roman Empire reared a literary edifice (an architectural term is



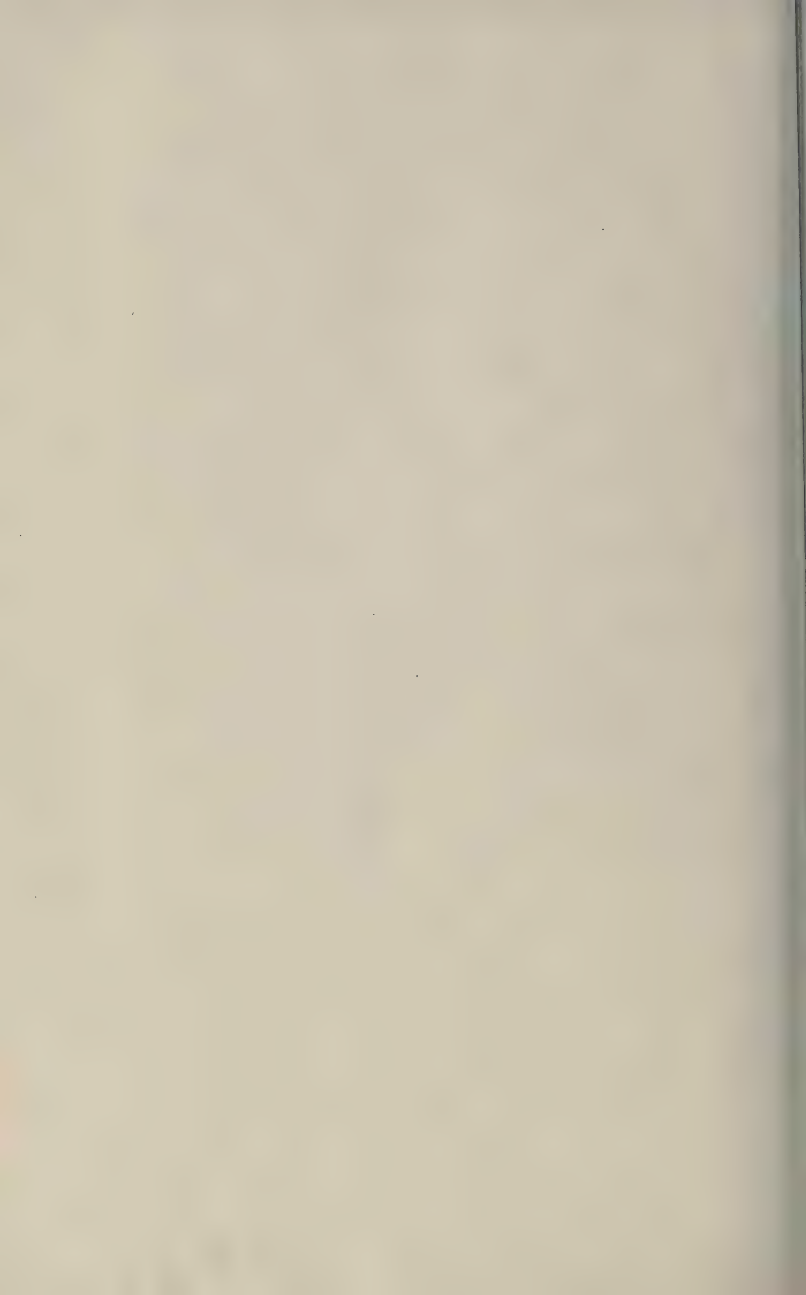
the word for that book) which seems certain of maintaining its supremacy over the empire of the human mind much as Rome herself has maintained supremacy. The solidity of some Roman structure is seen in that history. We behold the nobility of Roman conception and the charm of Roman structural strength. Gibbon was born an Englishman and educated a French Swiss, but he seems rather a product of the civilization whose decay he recorded — that civilization founded in character, reared in intelligence, and so supreme in efficiency as to have retained the awe-struck wonder of all nations since.

This isolation of the man as a workman has found its counterpart in the isolation of his book — a monumental piece of writing, set in a place apart, the most famous in its kind that a century and more have seen, and the one that seems most certain of long life among generations yet to live. We can easily moralize over all this concentration of effort and the resultant renown to the author. That Gibbon seriously expected such fame as now attends his name we cannot assume. Success he had in his own day, it is true, and a success in which he must have found great joy; but it scarcely presaged the wide esteem that has followed in its train.

Gibbon unquestionably was ambitious. He bore his want of success in Parliament with the fortitude that he showed in the presence of all other disappointments (and he had his share of them — in love, income, and health); but this was at a time when his

book had pointed out the road to other eminence. Here, doubtless, lay the source of Gibbon's consolation. When, finally, the book was completed, and Sheridan had mentioned it in his speech at the trial of Warren Hastings, Gibbon must have dimly foreseen that to him might after all come a fame wider and more lasting than that of princes, statesmen, or soldiers — the fame of him who writes a truly great book.

As the Catholic church continuing the sway of the Cæsars may live to verify Macaulay's prophecy and welcome his New Zealander to a broken arch of London Bridge, so may Gibbon's work be still holding together its empire over the minds of readers when that time comes. The world's great poets, Homer, Dante, and Shakespeare, may have longer life than he, but where else in literature shall we find a name more certain of renown among a very late posterity? Gibbon, as I have said, knew the supreme permanence of the highest literary fame over all other fame whatsoever. He declared with conscious pride that Fielding's "splendid picture of human manners" would "outlive the palace of the Escorial and the imperial eagle of the house of Austria." Gibbon might have envied Pitt his fame, or Fox his (had envy been possible to Gibbon's breast), but his own fame is destined to longer permanence than theirs. He stands apart, alone in his solitary grandeur.



## INDEX

ACADEMIES OF LETTERS, 57-62.  
 "Academy, The London," 57, 84.  
 Achilles, 120.  
 Addison, Joseph, 138, 202.  
 Ainger, Alfred, his edition of Lamb, 73, 74.  
 "Albany Argus, The," 37.  
 Albany Regency, the, 37.  
 Alcott, Louisa M., 93; her devoted life, 124, 196.  
 Aldus, Manutius, books printed by, 85, 151, 170.  
 Alhambra, the, 118.  
 Allen, James Lane, 82.  
 Alloway, Burns's birthplace, 38, 198, 201.  
 "American Catalogue, The," 5.  
 "American Commonwealth, The," 22.  
 American Library Association, the, 86-88.  
 "An Epistle to Posterity," Mrs. Sherwood's book, 195.  
 Appleton, D., & Co., 16.  
 Argyll, Duke of, 58.  
 Arnold, Matthew, 29.  
 Arnold, William H., his collection, 20, 155; profits from, 163.  
 Ashburnham, Earl of, his collection, 166-169.  
 Assyria, 117.  
 "Athenæum, The," London, 35.  
 Athens, 116.  
 Atlanta, Georgia, 87.  
 Audubon, John James, his "Journals," 46-47, 189.  
 Audubon, Maria R., 47.  
 Austen, Jane, 13; money received from her books, 25; her provincial life, 126; her knowledge of her own powers, 127.

Authors, rapid production by, 7; pecuniary rewards of, 21, 28; relations of, with publishers, 26, 28; early struggles of great ones, 29-38; unknown but widely read ones, 38-40; Academies of, 57-62; those greater than their books, 122-132; incomes needed by, when historians, 133-134.  
 Authors' Club, the, 41.

BABYLONIA, 117.  
 Bacon, Lord, 225.  
 Bailey, Miss Catherine, 96.  
 Bainbridge, Commodore William, 139.  
 Bancroft, George, 133; his "History of the United States," 141, 142, 172.  
 Barrie, James M., 81, 157; his "Margaret Ogilvy," 194.  
 Bath, England, 126.  
 "Bay Psalm Book, The," 163.  
 Bayle, Pierre, 77.  
 Beckford, William, his library, 167.  
 Beers, Professor Henry A., his views of Willis, 97-98, 99, 100, 102.  
 Begg, Mrs. —, Burns's sister, 205.  
 Bennet, Elizabeth, 127.  
 Bismarck, Prince, his letters, 189.  
 "Black Rock," 24.  
 Blackmore, R. D., 58.  
 Blashfield, E. H., and Vasari, 147.  
 Blashfield, E. W., and Vasari, 147.  
 Blessington, Countess of, 7, 98.  
 Boccaccio, Giovanni, 155; the Valdarfer edition of, 167.  
 Brinley, George, sale of his library, 151, 157, 158; how he found rare books, 161, 169.  
 Brunelleschi, Filippo, his dome, 148.  
 Brunson, Mrs. —, 96.

- "Book Buyer, The," vii.  
 Book-plates, collectors of, 153-154.  
 Books, contemporary output of, 3;  
   number published in former times,  
   4-5; number now in print, 5;  
   ephemeral nature of many, 5; rapid  
   production of, 6; causes of the out-  
   put, 9-12; classes of most pub-  
   lished, 15; centres of publishing,  
   15-16; at auction, 16; methods of  
   selling, 17-19; authors' returns  
   from, 20-28; unknown but widely  
   read, 38-40; immoral ones, 45-47;  
   advice as to reading, 48-49; re-  
   views of, 49-56; only tribunal for,  
   53; editing old ones, 63-76; me-  
   chanical side of, 77-85; for child-  
   ren, 77-78; sold by subscription,  
   78-79; covers for, 81; for sum-  
   mer reading, 79, 82-83; privately  
   printed, 83; influence of librarians  
   on, 86-93; neglect of the best, 104-  
   105; restraint on the output of,  
   105-107; difficulties librarians have  
   with, 107, 108; those of power, 108;  
   reaction against fiction, 109; great  
   ones that do not go out of fashion,  
   115; praise of, 115; the num-  
   ber will increase, 116; survive all  
   changes, 117; good ones will not  
   die, 118; changing fashions in col-  
   lecting, 150; demand for Ameri-  
   cana, 151, 157; extra illustrated,  
   152-153; first editions of, 154-157;  
   second-hand ones, 158, 159; values  
   in Americana, 162; profits in old  
   ones, 160-169; the most costly,  
   163; discrimination in buying, 156;  
   men who printed early ones, 170;  
   of the memoir class, 184-187.  
 Booksellers, restoration of their trade,  
   18; steps for relief of, 19.  
 Boone, Daniel, 47.  
 Boston, as a former centre of pub-  
   lishing, 15; its dislike of Willis,  
   101.  
 Boswell, James, his life of Johnson,  
   12, 64, 184, 189.  
 Bradford, William, his press, 158, 175.  
 Braybrooke, Lord, his edition of  
   Pepys, 207.  
 Bressani, Father, 174.  
 Bright, Mynors, his edition of Pepys,  
   207.  
 Brontë, Charlotte, 25; her fame, 121,  
   131.  
 Brooks, Noah, 92.  
 Brown, John Carter, his library, 162.  
 Browning, Robert, his "Pauline,"  
   22; his letters and those of Mrs.  
   Browning, 46, 189; his "Ring and  
   the Book," 164.  
 Bryant, William Cullen, 191.  
 Bryce, James, his "American Com-  
   monwealth," 21.  
 Buckingham, Duke of, 231.  
 Buckle, Henry Thomas, 31.  
 Buffalo Public Library, the, 108.  
 Bunyan, John, 92.  
 Burke, Edmund, 237.  
 Burnett, Frances Hodgson, 92.  
 Burns, Gilbert, 203.  
 Burns, Robert, 12; the Kilmarnock  
   edition of his poems, 22, 151, 152;  
   payments for his songs, 25; extra  
   illustrated, 152; pecuniary returns  
   of, 198; his immediate popularity,  
   199; his Edinburgh visit, 199, 200,  
   205; his homes, 201-205.  
 Burns, William, the poet's father, 201.  
 Burroughs, John, 92.  
 Burton, Robert, his "Anatomy of  
   Melancholy," 41, 150.  
 Byron, Ada, 69.  
 Byron, John, Captain, the poet's  
   father, 69.  
 Byron, Lord, 12; his liking for Burton,  
   42, 49; latest edition of his works,  
   69; a revival of, 70, 71, 115, 120;  
   quoted, 140, 154; books of his that  
   are rare, 157; his letters, 184; a  
   cause of memoir writing, 185, 186;  
   and Gibbon, 242, 243.  
 CÆSAR, JULIUS, 120, 240.  
 Caine, Hall, 17, 22, 39.  
 Carlyle, Thomas, 8; and Emerson,  
   30; his "Sartor Resartus," 31, 40;



- advice by, as to reading, 48, 49;  
on Shakespeare, 60; on Wash-  
ington, 69; memoirs of, 186; early  
struggles of, 198; his "French  
Revolution," 213, 243.
- Carnarvon, Lord, 215, 220.
- Carnegie, Andrew, 86, 91.
- Century Company, the, 16.
- Cervantes, Miguel de, 117; fame of,  
118, 230.
- Champlin, John D., 92.
- Chapman, George, his translation of  
Homer, 164.
- Charles I., 228.
- Chatterton, Thomas, 191.
- Chaucer, Geoffrey, 84, 115, 242.
- Chautauqua, education at, 9.
- Chesterfield, Lord, his views of life,  
214; failure of, as statesman, 215;  
his sad old age, 216; his "Letters,"  
217-222; quoted, 220, 223.
- Chicago, book-publishing in, 15.
- "Childe Harold," 156.
- "Choir Invisible, The," 82.
- Chorley, Henry F., 35.
- "Christian, The," 24.
- Churchill, Winston, 17, 23, 39.
- Cibber, Colley, his "Autobiography,"  
184, 186.
- Clarendon, Earl of, his writings, 123-  
124, 133.
- Clarke, Mary Cowden, her "Auto-  
biography," 195.
- Claudian aqueduct, the, 117.
- Clive, Robert, Lord, 60.
- Coleridge, Samuel Taylor, 12, 70, 164.
- Collier, Jeremy, 209, 210.
- Concord, Mass., 30; "Old Manse"  
at, 33, 38.
- Condell, Henry, 60-62.
- Cook, Dutton, 8.
- Coolidge, Susan, 92.
- Cooper, Fenimore, 81; his want of  
style, 102.
- "Cotter's Saturday Night, The," 205.
- Cowper, William, letters of, 189.
- Craddock, Charles Egbert, 92.
- Crawford, Marion, 24.
- "Crisis, The," 24.
- "Critic, The," vii.
- Croker, John Wilson, his edition of  
Boswell, 234, 236.
- Cromwell, Oliver, 56, 187.
- Croswell, Edwin, 37.
- Curtis, George William, 33, 34.
- "Cushman's Sermon," 164.
- Cuvier, Georges, Baron, 47.
- DALLAS, ROBERT C., 184.
- Dana, John Cotton, 109, 110.
- D'Annunzio, Gabrielle, 45. *a*
- Dante, Alighieri, the few who read,  
29; his want of contemporary rec-  
ognition, 60, 116, 119, 120; the man  
as great as the author, 182, 245.
- "David Copperfield," 39.
- "David Harum," 106; sales of, 24.
- Deane sale, the, 162.
- "Decline and Fall of the Roman  
Empire, The," 234-235, 238-245.
- Defoe, Daniel, 92.
- Del Sarto, Andrea, 146.
- "Democratic Review, The," 35.
- Department stores, influence of, on  
book trade, 17.
- De Quincey, Thomas, 108.
- "Deserted Village, The," 163.
- De Vinne, Theodore L., 83.
- Dibdin, Thomas F., his heroes, 150;  
sales he celebrated, 155, 167.
- Dickens, Charles, sales of his books,  
24, 92; collectors of, 155, 157; and  
the common people, 181.
- Dobson, Austin, 58.
- "Dr. Grimshawe's Secret," 32.
- Dodd, Mead & Company, 16, 226.
- Dodge, Mary Mapes, 92.
- Dolet, Etienne, his "Commentary,"  
158.
- "Dolliver Romance, The," 32.
- "D'ri and I," 24.
- Dryden, John, 189.
- Du Maurier, George, 17, 22, 24.
- Dunbar, Paul L., 23.
- "EBEN HOLDEN," 24.
- Ecclefechan, Carlyle's birthplace,  
38.

- Edinburgh, Scott's home in, 182;  
Burns's visit to, 199.
- Eggleston, Edward, 92.
- Egypt, folk tales from, 13, 117.
- "Elegy written in a Country Church-  
yard, The," 72, 174.
- Eliot, George, 25, 92, 131.
- Eliot, John, his translation of the  
Bible, 157, 158.
- Elizabeth, Queen, 149.
- Ellis, Mrs. —, 8.
- Elmendorf, Henry L., 108, 109.
- Elzevirs, the, books printed by, 85,  
151.
- Emerson, Ralph Waldo, 8; quoted,  
29; and Carlyle, 30, 34, 42;  
Holmes's life of, 52; his "Thren-  
ody," 164.
- "Englishwoman's Love Letters, An,"  
24.
- Erasmus, Desiderius, 77.
- Estienne, Robert, 170.
- "Eternal City, The," 24.
- Evelyn, John, his "diary," 184; and  
Pepys, 209, 210, 212.
- "FANSHAWE," Hawthorne's story,  
32; rarity of, 155, 156, 163-164.
- Farragut, David, the admiral, 139.
- "Faust," 120.
- Fergusson, Robert, 199, 202.
- Ferrier, Dr. —, 167.
- Fiction, kinds of popular, 12-13, 14-  
15; writing of a growing pursuit,  
13; rewards for writing, 23-25; re-  
duction of output, 24; per cent, 109.
- Fielding, Henry, his "Tom Jones,"  
78, 115; first edition of, 156, 181,  
184; Gibbon's praise of, 245.
- Fiske, John, 92, 175.
- Fitzgerald, Edward, his version of  
Omar, value of first edition of, 119,  
165.
- Florence, 145; greatness of, 148.
- Foote, Charles B., his collection, 155.
- Ford, Paul Leicester, his successful  
books, 17, 23; "Peter Stirling," 51;  
"The True George Washington,"  
67.
- Ford, Worthington C., his "Writings  
of Washington," 66-69, 236.
- Forsythe, John, 36.
- Foster, Mrs. Jonathan, 145.
- Foster, William E., his collection of  
"books of power," 108-109.
- Fox, Caroline, her recollections, 195.
- Fox, Charles James, 237, 245.
- Francis, Dr. John W., his "Old New  
York," 153.
- Franklin, Benjamin, his press, 158;  
his autobiography, 186.
- Freeman, Edward A., his history,  
133, 172, 241.
- French Academy, the, 59.
- Frontenac, Louis de Buade, Count,  
173.
- Froude, James Anthony, 68, 172.
- Fuller, Margaret, her place in Ameri-  
can literature, 125-126.
- GALT, JOHN, 7.
- Gardiner, Samuel R., 58.
- Garrison, William Lloyd, life of, by  
his sons, 139-140.
- Gaskell, Mrs. Elizabeth, 8.
- George III., 218.
- Germany, number of books pub-  
lished in, 3; book fairs in, 4.
- Gettysburg, Lincoln's speech at, 121.
- Gibbon, Edward, 12, 23, 49, 133;  
greatest of English historians, 135,  
143; and Parkman, 172; his auto-  
biography, 184, 233-236; his letters,  
236-242; his "Decline and Fall,"  
140, 237, 245; his pride in author-  
ship, 242; his achievement, 243-  
245.
- "Gideon Giles," 39.
- Gilbert, W. S., 58.
- Gladstone, William E., 58, 190.
- Goethe, Johann Wolfgang von, 120,  
148, 175, 190.
- "Golden Treasury, The," 74-76.
- Goldsmith, Oliver, his "Vicar of  
Wakefield," 22, 163, 240.
- Gosse, Edmund, 58; his edition of  
Gray, 71-73.
- Grangerites, the, 153.

- Grant, General U. S., 23.  
 Gray, Thomas, Gosse's edition of, 71-73; his "Elegy," 174, 184.  
 Great Britain, end of three-volume novels in, 11; number of books published in, 3.  
 Great Meadows, battle of, 174.  
 Green, John Richard, 117; his history of England, 140, 143, 172, 243.  
 Grenville, Thomas, his collection, 165.  
 Grolier Club, the, 83, 85.  
 Growoll, A., 5.  
 Grundy, Felix, 36.  
 Gutenberg Bible, the, enhanced value of, 165-166, 169.  
 HALLAM, ARTHUR, 75.  
 Halsey, Miss Lavantia, dedication to, v.  
 Hamerton, Philip Gilbert, 187, 188.  
 Hamilton, Lady (Emma Lyon), 136, 137.  
 Hare, Augustus J. C., 187, 188.  
 "Hariot's Virginia," 163.  
 Harper & Brothers, 16.  
 Harrison, Frederic, advice by, as to reading, 48, 49.  
 Hastings, Warren, 60.  
 Hawthorne, Nathaniel, 8; his "Fanshawe," 22; his "Twice-Told Tales," 25; late recognition of, 32-37; recognition by best minds, 35; his early writings, 35; and the critics, 50, 81; and Willis, 103, 115; income of, from tales, 119; collectors of, 155, 156, 163, 198.  
 Hay, John, his "Life of Lincoln," 141, 142.  
 Hazlitt, William, 53.  
 "Heavenly Twins, The," 106.  
 Heber, Richard, 155; his books, 166.  
 Hector of Troy, 120.  
 Helen of Troy, 120.  
 Helps, Sir Arthur, 211.  
 Heminge, John, 60, 62.  
 "Henry Esmond," 39.  
 Herbert, George, 232.  
 Herbert, Lord, of Cherbury, 184; his "Autobiography," 224-232; his character and public offices, 225-226; his vanity, 227-231; his inglorious end, 232.  
 Herndon, William H., his "Life of Lincoln," 144, 146.  
 Heron, Robert, 199.  
 Hervey, Lord, 216.  
 Hill, George Birkbeck, his services to Boswell and Johnson, 64-65, 236.  
 Hoe, Robert, 162.  
 Holmes, Oliver Wendell, 33; his liking for Burton, 42; and Emerson, 52, 93.  
 Homer, 29, 120.  
 "Honourable Peter Stirling, The," 51.  
 Hood, Thomas, 8.  
 Hopkins, A. A., and Vasari, 147.  
 Horace, the Roman poet, 118.  
 Hosack, Dr. —, 97.  
 Houghton, Mifflin & Co., 16.  
 Howell, James, his "Letters," 41.  
 Howells, William Dean, 39.  
 Howitt, Mary, 8.  
 Hugo, Victor, his "Letters," 189, 190; his early life, 192-193.  
 Hume, David, 133, 172, 243, 245.  
 Hume, Martin, 68.  
 Hunt, Leigh, 184.  
 "INDEPENDENT, THE," vii.  
 "Influence of Sea Power in History, The," 135.  
 "In Memoriam," 75.  
 "Intellectual Life, The," 188.  
 Iowa, library work in, 92.  
 Irving, Washington, and Sparks, 65; his books once badly printed, 81; his standing in England, 99, 102; his "Grenada," 118; his "Washington," 153, 172.  
 Italy, number of books published in, 3.  
 Ives, Brayton, 155, 161.  
 "JACK HARKAWAY," 39.  
 Jackson, Helen Hunt, 93.  
 "Jane Eyre," 120.

- "Janice Meredith," 24.  
 Jeffrey, Francis, 47, 290.  
 Jesuit Missionaries, 173.  
 "Jesuit Relations, The," 175-177.  
 Jogues, Father Isaac, his martyrdom, 174.  
 Johnson, Samuel, 42; the man, not the author, survives, 64, 184; and Chesterfield, 216-217, 240, 243.  
 Johnson, William, 96.  
 Jonson, Ben, 61, 62, 225.  
 Jumonville, Coulon de, death of, 174.
- KEATS, JOHN, 166.  
 Kelmscott Press, the, 84.  
 Kendall, Amos, 37.  
 Kilmarnock, Burns's poems printed at, 22, 151, 152, 198.  
 Kilpatrick, Nellie, Burns's associate, 203.  
 Kipling, Rudyard, 17, 22, 39, 81, 157.  
 Knox, John, 187.
- "LADY GREYGOWN," 89.  
 Lake George, battle of, 173.  
 Lake Placid Club, the, 88.  
 Lakewood-on-Chautauqua, 87.  
 Lamb, Charles, 12, 73-74, 92.  
 Landor, Walter Savage, 12, 99; where he is not known, 106, 115.  
 Lang, Andrew, 58, 157.  
 Lawrence, Sir Thomas, 47.  
 Lecky, W. E. H., 58.  
 Lee, Sidney, and Lord Herbert of Cherbury, 224, 225, 227, 232.  
 Lenox, James, 176.  
 "Letter of Columbus, The," value of, 163.  
 "Letters from under a Bridge," Willis's book, 101.  
 Librarians, their work and influence, 86-93; a restraining force on poor books, 106; dependence of, on reviews, 107.  
 Library of Congress, 11.  
 "Library Week," 88.  
 Lincoln, Abraham, 47, 121; the Nicolay and Hay life of, 141, 142; Herndon's life of, 143-145.
- Lippincott, J. B., Company, 16.  
 Lockhart, John Gibson, 200.  
 Longfellow, Henry Wadsworth, 22, 33; article by, on Hawthorne, 35, 39, 155.  
 Long Island, south shore of, scene of Margaret Fuller's death, 125.  
 Longmans, Green & Co., 16.  
 Lorenzo de' Medici, 148.  
 Louisbourg, siege of, 173.  
 Louis Napoleon, and Talleyrand, 193.  
 Lovelace, Earl of, and Byron, 69.  
 Lowell, James Russell, 50, 53, 93; his "Letters," 189, 190.  
 Luther, Martin, 187.  
 "Lyrics of Lowly Life," 23, 106.
- MABIE, HAMILTON W., 89.  
 Macaulay, Thomas Babington, stories of his reading, 31, 133; money from his books, 134, 172, 241, 243, 245.  
 McCarthy, Justin, 58.  
 Macdonald, George, 58.  
 McKinley, William, 86.  
 Maclaren, Ian, 17.  
 Macmillan, Frederick, 6.  
 Magdalen College, Oxford, 206.  
 Mahan, Captain A. T., his equipment as historian, 135; his "Life of Nelson," 136, 139; how he became an author, 137-139.  
 Marat, Dr. Jean Paul, 68.  
 Marbot, Baron, his "Memoirs," 193.  
 Marcus Aurelius, 240.  
 "Margaret Ogilvy," 194.  
 Masson, David, his "Life of Milton," 141.  
 Matthews, Brander, 92.  
 Mauchline, Burns's home, 198, 203.  
 Medwin, Thomas, 184.  
 "Memories of Old Friends," 195.  
 Meteyard, Eliza, 8.  
 Metternich, Prince, his "Memoirs," 193.  
 Michaelangelo, 146.  
 "Michael Strogoff," 40.  
 Milton, John, payments to, for his "Paradise Lost," and the value of

- copies of the first edition now, 20, 21, 22, 23; few who read, 29, 49, 60, 71, 115, 119, 120; Masson's life of, 141, 155, 164; the man as great as the writer, 182, 184, 198.
- Minuit, Peter, 176.
- "Mr. Isaacs," 24.
- Molière, Jean B. P., 117.
- Montaigne, Michel de, 41, 42.
- Moore, Thomas, 69, 184.
- Morley, John, 58.
- Morris, William, 83-85.
- Mossgiel, Burns's home, 198, 203, 204.
- Motley, John Lothrop, 172.
- Mount Oliphant, Burns's home, 201, 202.
- Müller, Max, 190.
- Murdock, —, Burns's teacher, 202.
- Murray, John, 31.
- NANSEN, FRIDJOF, profits of, from his books, 20-21, 22.
- Napoleon Bonaparte, influence of his wars on books, 12, 183, 193.
- National Institute of Arts and Letters, the, 105.
- Nelson, Horatio, Viscount, lives of, 136, 137.
- "New England Magazine, The," 35.
- New Haven, 95.
- New York, centre of the book business, 6, 15-16; Willis in, 96.
- New York Library Association, the, 88-91.
- "New York Times, The," vii.
- Nicolay, John G., 141, 142.
- "North American Review, The," 35.
- O'CALLAGHAN, DR. EDMUND BAI-LEY, 177.
- "Ode on Intimations of Immortality, The," 106.
- Oliphant, Mrs. Margaret Wilson, 128; her devoted life, 129; her want of illusions, 130; her lack of literary ambition, 131; the woman side of, 132.
- Omar Khayyam, 119.
- Osborne, Dorothy, her "Letters," 196.
- "Our Mutual Friend," 39.
- PALESTINE, 117.
- Palgrave, Francis Turner, 74-76.
- "Pall Mall Gazette, The," 57.
- Pantheon, the Roman, 116.
- Parkman, Francis, 133, 135; value of his writings, 172-175; his use of the "Jesuit Relations," 176, 241.
- Parthenon, the, 116.
- Paul Veronese, 146.
- Peck, Harry Thurston, 89.
- "Pencilings by the Way," Willis's book, 101.
- Pennsylvania railroad, the, 37.
- Pepperill, Sir William, 174.
- Pepys, Samuel, his "Diary," 184, 189, 206-213; his character and position, 209-211; merit of his "Diary," 213.
- Perry, Commodore O. H., 139.
- Philadelphia, a former centre of book-publishing, 15.
- Philip II., 68.
- Phillips, Stephen, 23.
- Pierce, Edward L., his "Life of Sumner," 141.
- Pitt, William, 237, 245.
- Plato, 29.
- Poe, Edgar A., his "Tamerlane," 22, 95; Willis's kindness to, 101, 198.
- Poinsett, J. R., 36.
- Pontiac, his conspiracy, 174.
- Pope, Alexander, 191, 202.
- Prescott, William H., his histories, 133, 172, 241.
- "Pride and Prejudice," 127.
- Princeton, 148.
- Providence Public Library, the, 108.
- Publishers, manuscripts they reject, 6; making better books, 10; those in several cities, 15-16; relations with authors, 26-28.
- Pusey, Dr. Edward B., 190.
- Putnam, Herbert, 86.
- Putnam's Sons, G. P., 16.

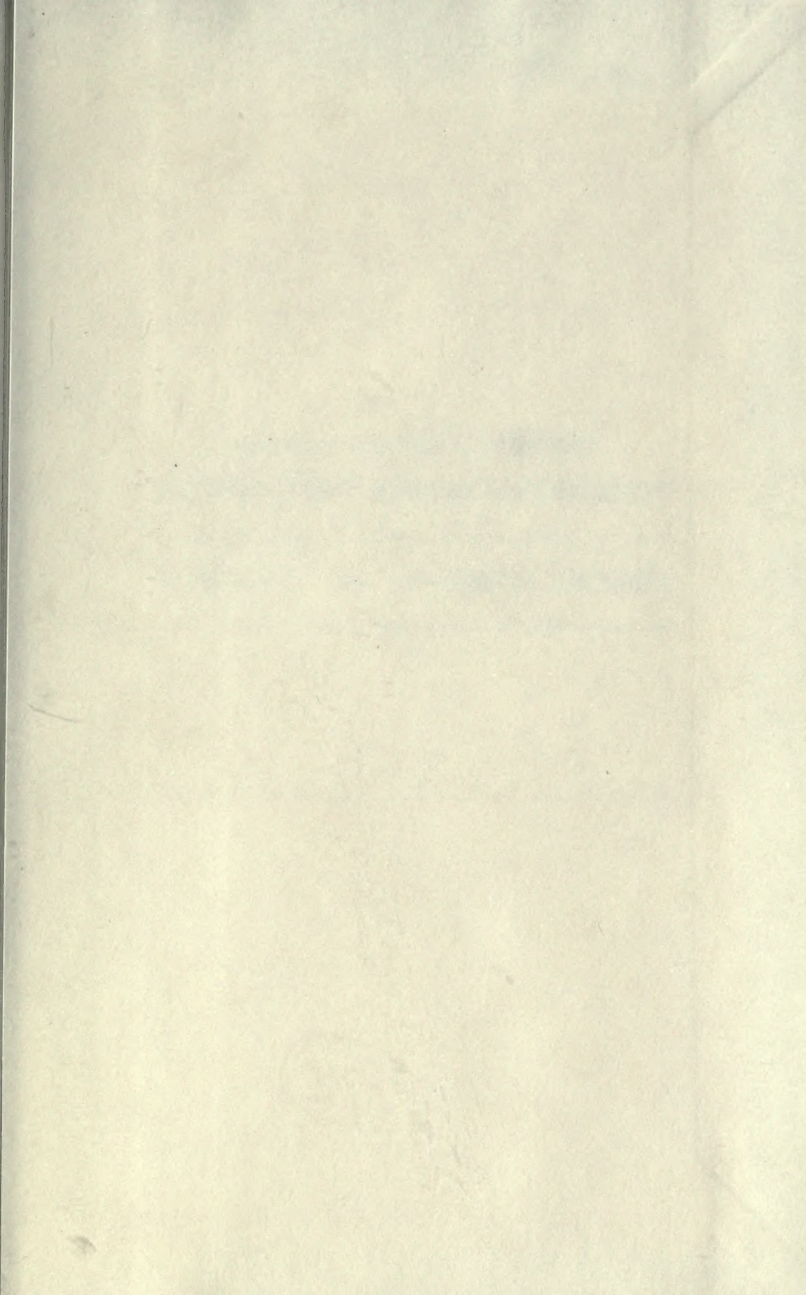


- QUARITCH, BERNARD, 165.  
 "Quincy Adams Sawyer," 24.  
 "Quo Vadis," immorality of, 43-45, 47.
- RAPHAEL SANZIO, 146.  
 "Rasselas," 65.  
 Reade, Charles, 39.  
 Rémusat, Madame de, her "Memoirs," 193.  
 Revere, Paul, 154.  
 "Richard Carvel," 24.  
 Richardson, Dr. E. C., quoted, 3.  
 Richebourg, Émile, his popularity, 39, 41.  
 Richelieu, Duke de, 231.  
 "Richmond Enquirer, The," 37.  
 Ripley, George, 50.  
 Ritchie, "Father," 36, 37.  
 Rives, W. C., 36.  
 Robespierre, Maximilien M. I., 191.  
 Rogers, Samuel, quoted, 13.  
 Rome, 117.  
 Roxburghe Club, the, 157.  
 Ruskin, John, 8, 58, 92; quoted, 127.
- ST. JOHN'S COLLEGE, Cambridge, 206.  
 St. Mark's at Venice, 116.  
 "St. Paul Globe, The," vii.  
 St. Peter's at Rome, 116.  
 Sanborn, Frank B., 92.  
 Sand, George, 131.  
 Sansovino, Andrea, 146.  
 "Sant' Ilario," 24.  
 "Sartor Resartus," 31, 50, 51.  
 "Scarlet Letter, The," 33, 34, 59, 156.  
 Scott, Sir Walter, 12, 13, 23, 123; his recognition of Jane Austen, 25, 27, 49, 92; quoted, 128; still widely read, 179-180; his intellectual integrity, 181; his Edinburgh home, 182; and Burns, 200, 210, 241.  
 Scribner's Sons, Charles, 16.  
 Scudder, Horace E., 92.  
 Sebastopol, siege of, 121.  
 Selborne, White's book about, 38.
- "Septimius Felton," 32.  
 Shairp, John C., 201, 204.  
 Shakespeare, William, 29; publication of the first folio, 60-62; editors of, 63, 71, 78, 117; quoted, 118, 120; cost of a second folio, 168, 245.  
 Sheffield, Lord, and Gibbon, 234, 235.  
 Shelley, Percy B., his "Alastor," 32; his "Adonais," 156.  
 Sheridan, Richard Brinsley, 237.  
 Sherwood, Mrs. John, her "Memoirs," 195.  
 Sienkiewicz, Henry, 39, 43, 44.  
 Sinclair, Catherine, 8.  
 Skeat, W. W., 58.  
 Smith, Captain John, 206.  
 Smollett, Tobias, 181, 262.  
 Social Science Association, the, 105.  
 Solomon, king of Israel, 120.  
 Southey, Robert, 12, 136.  
 Sparks, Jared, 65, 236.  
 Spencer, Herbert, 58.  
 Springfield, Mass., City Library of, 109.  
 Stanley, Henry M., profits from his books, 21, 22.  
 Stanton, Elizabeth Cady, her reminiscences, 195, 197.  
 Stedman, Edmund Clarence, 74.  
 Stephen, Leslie, 58.  
 Stephens, H. Morse, 68.  
 Sterne, Laurence, 42, 184.  
 Stevenson, Robert Louis, 17; his "Letters," 46, 81; his death, 122, 157, 189.  
 Stewart, Dugald, 199, 200.  
 Stockton, Frank R., 39, 89.  
 Stowe, Harriet Beecher, 93.  
 Stratford, Shakespeare's birthplace, 38, 201.  
 Strickland, Agnes, 7.  
 Stubbs, William, 58.  
 Sumner, Charles, 141, 142.  
 Swinburne, Algernon Charles, 58.
- TACITUS, CORNELIUS, 133, 134.  
 Talleyrand-Périgord, Prince, his "Memoirs," 192, 194.  
 "Tam O'Shanter," 201.

- Tasso, Torquato, 191.  
 "Temple Classics, The," 78.  
 Tennyson, Alfred, Lord, 8, 22, 39;  
 and Palgrave, 75, 152; memoir of,  
 189, 190.  
 Thackeray, William Makepeace, 24;  
 quoted, 41, 115; collectors of, 155,  
 157; his sarcasm, 181; his praise  
 of "Tom Jones," 211, 230.  
 Thomas, Annie, 8.  
 Thomson, James, 154.  
 Thompson, George, 25.  
 Thoreau, Henry David, 34.  
 "Through South Africa," 21.  
 Thucydides, 133, 134.  
 Thwaites, Reuben Gold, 177.  
 Tintoretto, 146.  
 "To Have and To Hold," 24.  
 "Toilers of the Sea, The," 192.  
 "Token, The," 33.  
 Tolstoi, Leo, Count, his seventieth  
 birthday, 122-123.  
 "Tom Jones," 78, 211.  
 "Trade List Annual, The," 5.  
 Trevelyan, Sir George O., 58.  
 Trollope, Anthony, 7.  
 "True George Washington, The," 67.  
 "Twice-Told Tales," 25, 32, 35.
- UFFIZI PALACE, the, 147.
- VAN BUREN, MARTIN, 36.  
 Vandals, the, 153.  
 Vanderbilt, Cornelius, 163.  
 Van Dyke, Henry, 89, 105, 106.  
 "Vanity Fair," 39.  
 Vasari, Giorgio, his lives of artists,  
 145-149; as an artist, 146.
- Verne, Jules, 40.  
 Virgil, 116, 118, 120.
- WALKER, CHARLES CLEMENT, 60.  
 Walpole, Horace, 216, 224, 228,  
 240.  
 Walton, Izaak, his "Angler," 155.  
 Ward, Mrs. Humphry, 17, 24.  
 Warner, Charles Dudley, 105.  
 Warren, Samuel, 7.  
 Washington, George, his writings,  
 65; Weems's life of, 137; his book-  
 plate, 154; and the battle of Great  
 Meadows, 174.  
 Waterloo, Battle of, 12.  
 Waukesha, Wis., 87.  
 "Waverley Novels, The," 106, 182.  
 Webster, Daniel, 195.  
 Weems, Mason L., his "Life of  
 Washington," 137.  
 Western Union Telegraph, the, 37.  
 Wheatley, Henry B., 208.  
 Whipple, Edwin P., 50.  
 White, Gilbert, 37-38.  
 Whittier, John G., 93.  
 Wiggin, Kate Douglass, 92.  
 Willis, Nathaniel Parker, the pathos  
 of his fate, 94-103; an ephemeral  
 writer, 94; his early success, 96-  
 97; his life abroad, 98-100; Bos-  
 ton's dislike of him, 101.  
 Winchester, England, 126.  
 Wolfe, James, General, his victory at  
 Quebec, 173, 174.  
 Wordsworth, William, 12; his hum-  
 ble home, 40, 49, 70, 115.  
 Wycliffe, John, his translation of the  
 Bible, 168.

192

167







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